

## CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The Great Lakes Beach Conference was held at the Midland Hotel in Chicago from February 6 through 8, 2001. The conference was sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 and the City of Chicago. The focus of the conference was the science and technology of beach monitoring and closure, beach management, and resources to support beach programs. The 248 registered participants consisted of environmental and public health officials, local beach managers, regulators, community groups, research personnel, and others interested in beach management and protection. The conference provided numerous networking opportunities for participants to share information about their programs and learn what others are doing. In addition, 14 posters covering many aspects of modeling, monitoring, public outreach, economic impacts, source identification, and even a "Bacteria Game" were available to the participants throughout the conference. The conference agenda is included in Attachment 1.

A welcome and overview panel began the conference by discussing the current regulatory, physical, and biological situation of the Great Lakes. Mr. William Abolt of the City of Chicago Department of Environment and Mr. David Ullrich, Acting Regional Administrator for EPA Region 5, welcomed conference participants. Both pledged the commitment of their agencies to protecting the Great Lakes beaches.

City of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley then spoke during the conference luncheon. Mayor Daley indicated that the city's beaches are not only environmentally but also economically important to the city. He discussed the progress the city has made in the last 15 years to improve its beaches and restore their recreational uses. He also discussed the city's commitment to continuing the protection and restoration of the beaches.

The conference format included technical presentations with question-and-answer periods for the entire group and breakout sessions to discuss specific issues associated with the technical presentation. Topics included science and technology, regulatory and nonregulatory approaches, management of beaches, and public outreach and communication. Attachment 2 contains a copy of all the technical presentation slides. The breakout sessions provided opportunities for more interactive discussions focused on developing specific recommendations for policy, regulatory, and technical needs to support beach management programs on the Great Lakes, Lake St. Clair, and inland beaches. The recommendations generated during each breakout session are presented in Attachment 3.

On February 7, David Knight of the Great Lakes Seaway Magazine spoke during dinner. Mr. Knight discussed some of the economic benefits of the Great Lakes and focused on the thriving Great Lakes cruise industry.

After the technical breakout sessions were concluded, recommendations from each session were compiled for the lake watershed breakout sessions on February 8. These sessions included individuals participating or interested in the research, regulation, or management of a specific watershed. The watershed groups reviewed the recommendations and determined which were most applicable to their watershed and which to present during the Funding Sources and Capacity Building Overview and Panel Discussion. The watershed groups also identified additional recommendations that they see as a priority for funding in their watershed. Attachment 4 contains the recommendations from the watershed breakout sessions.

A brief summary of the lake watershed breakout recommendations was presented during the Funding Sources and Capacity Building Overview and Panel discussion. After the recommendations were presented, the panel speakers discussed federal, state, local, and nongovernment funding and networking

options available for implementing priority watershed recommendations. Attachment 5 presents a matrix of federal funding options available.

At the conclusion of the conference, Rick Hoffman of EPA presented a technical workshop on the federal beach bill to about 70 people. This workshop provided conference participants with the opportunity to understand the purpose of the beach bill and determine how it may apply to their group. Attachment 6 contains a copy of the beach bill.

As a result of the conference, many participants have a better understanding of additional technical and funding resources to implement or improve their programs. Attachment 7 presents a general list of information resources for Great Lake issues. Attachment 8 presents the final conference participant list, including contact information.