

Legislative aide Chris Knospe (pictured right) expresses Congressman Thomas Reynolds' support for Great Lakes restoration efforts to NYSG Director Jack Mattice.

Photos by Barbara A. Branca



Stakeholders Set Great Lakes Priorities

Earlier this year, priorities were identified to protect the Great Lakes, which make up one-fifth of the world's fresh surface water. In response, NYSG teamed up with the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) in late April for a public forum to solicit feedback from a variety of user groups. "In addition to offering presentations on the current state of Lakes Erie and Ontario," says NYSG's **Chuck O'Neill**, "we helped provide a forum for New York's Great Lakes resource users and managers to register their input on what they, as stakeholders, believe the restoration priorities to be."

The priorities, drafted by the Governors of the eight states containing the Great Lakes, target issues such as shoreline and economic development, fisheries and invasive species, water quality, pollution prevention and ensuring the sustainable use of resources. "Our intent with this workshop was to help identify the most important topics to focus and spend money on," says NYSG Director **Jack Mattice**. Following similar public discussions this past winter in Ohio and Pennsylvania, the aim was to "make certain New York got its druthers considered," says Mattice. "We wanted to make sure that the wants and needs of the lower Great Lakes are well represented in the legislation."

Through public forums such as this one, the GLC and Sea Grant are providing scientific and technical guidance for the generation of a final version of these legislative, appropriations and policy priorities. "We're addressing the complexities of restoration to reinforce the idea that it is not a black and white issue," says

GLC President **Mike Donahue**. "We're not out to show that the concept of restoration is new. It just hasn't been coordinated and packaged in a basin-wide initiative like this before."

In the coming months, proceedings will distill feedback to be shared with Great Lakes leadership and stakeholders. The document will be used to illustrate that, as Mattice describes, "High quality Great Lakes are high on every Basin resident's agenda. But the goals and schedules of restoration need the input from *all* stakeholders to make sure that the Lakes become all they can be for all of us." Adds O'Neill, "This input will help develop a shared vision and the principles, goals, objectives and strategic actions needed to achieve that vision."

— **Paul C. Focazio**

"The road to Great Lakes restoration begins with a well-informed stakeholder constituency," says NYSG's Chuck O'Neill, at podium.

