



January 7, 2011

The Honorable Jack Lew  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

VIA FACSIMILE: 202-395-3888

Director Lew:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write to ask that you assure the President's fiscal year 2012 budget proposal provides similar funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative as was provided in fiscal year 2010. In addition, we request that you ensure that agencies *not* use Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funds to off-set any reductions in base programs for ongoing management and conservation of the Great Lakes.

As you know, the \$475 million in funding that President Obama and Congress provided in fiscal year 2010 for the GLRI has energized the region. Project by project, communities are benefiting from successful restoration activities in the form of increased economic benefits and better quality of life. Restoration projects are creating jobs in many disciplines, from civil engineers to wetland biologists, from truck drivers to concrete workers. These good-paying jobs not only benefit the economy in the short term; they also lay the foundation for long-term prosperity.

This critical investment in Great Lakes restoration is possible because of the hard work that the Federal agencies, especially the Environmental Protection Agency, have put into organizing and implementing this tremendous effort. We know that restoration needs far outweigh available funding, which was made evident by the response to EPA's 2010 request for proposals under the GLRI, when the demand for funding outpaced the supply by more than 7-to-1. These funds have flowed to 15 Federal agencies and hundreds of projects in the region, over half of which are local on-the-ground restoration projects. These projects are advancing solutions to restore the Lakes—shutting the door on invasive species, restoring habitat, improving nearshore health and cleaning up toxic sediments.

The supplemental funding provided by the GLRI has been a critical factor in sparking increased restoration momentum. Even with this supplemental funding, however, all agencies still require on-going support for their base Great Lakes restoration programs. Both the Administration and Congress have stated clearly that special funding under the GLRI is intended to supplement, *not supplant*, funding for regional and national programs that support continued restoration of the Great Lakes. In its conference report for the fiscal year 2010 appropriations bill for the Department of Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Congress directed U.S. EPA to “work with the other Federal agencies to ensure [GLRI] funds supplement and expand, not supplant, base Great Lakes programs when compared to fiscal year 2009 levels” (Report 111-316). The GLRI Action Plan, adopted by the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force in February 2010, states that “agencies must assure that they continue to support their existing base program

activities in the Great Lakes and that added Initiative support will not be used to supplant their existing base funding.”

The Great Lakes are a wonder of the world. They hold one-fifth of the world’s fresh surface-water supply. More than 30 million people rely on the Lakes for their drinking water, and millions more benefit from the commerce and businesses they support in agriculture, industrial manufacturing, steel production, commercial and sport fisheries, and recreation and tourism. The Brookings Institution has also reported that Great Lakes restoration creates jobs in the short-term while laying the foundation for long-term prosperity—providing \$2 in economic benefit for every \$1 investment in restoration.

More than that, the Great Lakes define a way of life in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Progress is being made. Now is not the time to scale back our nation’s commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy. Otherwise, the problems will get worse and more expensive to solve. For the economy and the environment, please make sure that the fiscal year 2012 budget provides funding for the GLRI at levels similar to fiscal year 2010 and that all agency Great Lakes restoration base budgets are maintained.

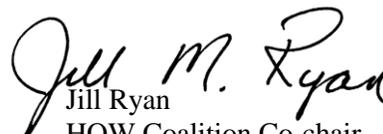
If you have questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact our policy director, Chad Lord, at 202-4543385 or [clord@npca.org](mailto:clord@npca.org).

Sincerely,

  
Andy Buchsbaum  
HOW Coalition Co-chair

  
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HOW Coalition Co-chair

  
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