



Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition

March 30, 2012

The Honorable Michael Simpson
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James P. Moran
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Moran:

We, the members of the Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition, ask that you provide \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in Fiscal Year 2013. The GLRI – and you – have provided the Great Lakes region with much-needed support, and we are seeing on-the-ground results in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. However, while pressures on Congress to balance the U.S. budget will not diminish, neither will the urgent problems facing the Great Lakes. If we cut restoration funds, these serious problems will only get worse and the price we pay will be much higher.

Great Lakes restoration efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and work is beginning on over 700 restoration projects throughout the region that will measurably restore the Great Lakes and address the most urgent problems facing them. These projects are cleaning up drinking water flowing to millions of homes and thousands of industries and improving infrastructure important for future economic growth in the eight-state region. These projects are delivering results throughout, including:

- In Fennville, Michigan, \$220,000 from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is helping nurse lake sturgeon back to health in the Kalamazoo River after decades of decline. An innovative fish-rearing facility allowed biologists to release 100 sturgeons in the Kalamazoo River in 2011.
- In Milwaukee, Wis., state and federal agencies announced in February the completion of a \$24.6 million sediment cleanup that moves the Milwaukee Estuary closer to being removed from a list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern. The \$24.6 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative project removed about 140,000 cubic yards of toxic sediment contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PCBs and PAHs. The contamination led to limits on eating fish caught in the river, as well as loss of habitat and other environmental problems.
- In Toledo, Ohio, \$47 million in Federal Great Lakes restoration funds (\$2 million under budget) supported removal of 260,000 cubic yards of toxic sediment, which posed a risk to people and wildlife—including major sportfish such as walleye and perch, along a 5-mile stretch of the Ottawa River. Nearly 260,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment was dredged from a 5.5-mile stretch of the river in Toledo. For decades, the river was a major source of chemical pollutants entering Lake Erie's Maumee Bay, where the contaminants harmed fish and wildlife.

Crews worked around the clock to finish the project in six months; it was scheduled to take two years.

More stories on the nearly 700 GLRI-funded projects currently underway can be found at www.healthylakes.org.

Investments in Great Lakes restoration also create short-term jobs and lead to long-term economic benefits for the Great Lakes states and the country. A Brookings Institution report shows that every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration generates \$2 in return, making Great Lakes restoration one of the best investments with the federal dollar in the budget. More recent research from Grand Valley State University suggests that the return for certain projects may be closer to 6-to-1. The University of Michigan has also demonstrated that over 1.5 million jobs are dependent on clean and healthy Great Lakes, accounting for more than \$60 billion in wages annually. We have also seen jobs being created by our nation's efforts to clean up the Great Lakes and restore fish and wildlife habitat. These jobs include wetland scientists, electricians, engineers, landscape architects, plumbers, truck drivers and many others.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done. Aging sewers, invasive species, and toxic pollutants are just a few of the pervasive threats that impact the region, endangering human and wildlife health, lowering property values, and hurting the region's economy. Cutting funding will slow restoration efforts, allowing problems to get worse and more expensive to solve. Ultimately, cutting spending on the Great Lakes won't save money—it will cost the nation more. As the source of drinking water for 30 million people, the nation cannot afford not to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

We appreciate the support for Great Lakes restoration in recent years and urge continued support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which is critically important to the sustainability and economic vitality of the Great Lakes and the surrounding eight-state region. If you have any questions, please contact Chad Lord, policy director of the Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition at (202) 454-3385 or clord@npca.org.

Sincerely,

Joel Brammeier
President & CEO
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Katie Rousseau
Associate Director
American Rivers

Albert E. Caccese
Executive Director
Audubon New York

Jill Spisiak Jedlicka
Director of Ecological Programs & Riverkeeper
Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper

Matt Misicka
Chair, Ohio Advisory Committee
Bull Moose Sportsmen's Alliance

Scott Popplewell
President
Central Ohio Anglers' & Hunters' Club

Dr. Stuart D. Strahl
President and CEO
Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo

Brian Smith
Program & Communications Director
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Cyndi Roper
Michigan Director
Clean Water Action – Michigan

Deanna White
State Director
Clean Water Action – Minnesota

Melissa Malott
Water Program Director
Clean Wisconsin

Anne Vaara
Executive Director
Clinton River Watershed Council

Robert Stegmier
Conservation Chair
Dwight Lydel Chapter of the Izaak Walton League
of America

Tracey Easthope
Director, Environmental Health Project
Ecology Center

Katherine Nadeau
Water & Natural Resources Program Director
Environmental Advocates of New York

Jim Olson
Chair
Flow for Water

Jill Ryan
Executive Director
Freshwater Future

Ray Stewart
President and Director of Communications
Friends of Wetlands

Mike Strigel
Executive Director
Gathering Waters Conservancy

June Summers
President
Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Nick Schroeck
Executive Director
Great Lakes Environmental Law Center

John Jackson
Program Director
Great Lakes United

Rachel Kuntzsch
Executive Director
Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation
Policy

Jill Crafton
Chair - Great Lakes Committee
Izaak Walton League of America

Tom Fuhrman
President
Lake Erie Region Conservancy

Sandy Bihn
Executive Director
Lake Erie Waterkeeper Inc.

Brian Price
Executive Director
Leelanau Conservancy

James Clift
Policy Director
Michigan Environmental Council

Erin McDonough
Executive Director
Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Dennis Fijalkowski
Executive Director
Michigan Wildlife Conservancy

Karen Schapiro
Executive Director
Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Steve Morse
Executive Director
Minnesota Environmental Partnership

John P. Lenczewski
Executive Director
Minnesota Trout Unlimited

Lynn McClure
Midwest Regional Director
National Parks Conservation Association

Scott Strand
Executive Director
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Melinda Hughes-Wert
President
Nature Abounds

Andy Buchsbaum
Executive Director, Great Lakes Regional Center
National Wildlife Federation

Peter Avis, PhD
Chief Director
Northwest Indiana Restoration Monitoring
Inventory

Marc Hudon
Chair, Water Commission
Nature Quebec

Kristy Meyer
Director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs
Ohio Environmental Council

Jim Storer
President
Ohio Division, Izaak Walton League of America

Nicole Barker
Executive Director
Save the Dunes

Denny Caneff
Executive Director
River Alliance of Wisconsin

Anne Ginn
President
Shaker Lakes Garden Club

Jennifer Caddick
Executive Director
Save The River – Upper St. Lawrence
Riverkeeper

Emily Green
Great Lakes Program Director
Sierra Club

Wayne Howard
Chair
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Great Lakes
Committee

Jennifer McKay
Policy Specialist
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Julene Boe
Executive Director
St. Louis River Alliance

Andy Knott
Executive Director
The Watershed Center, Grand Traverse Bay

Dendra J. Best
Executive Director
Wastewater Education

Tracy Hames
Executive Director
Wisconsin Wetlands Association

Ellen Satterlee
CEO
The Wege Foundation

George Meyer
Executive Director
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation