



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

March 22, 2012

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies Appropriations
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies Appropriations
125 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

As members of the Great Lakes delegation, we are writing to express our support for programs in the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency that protect human health as well as fish and wildlife resources in the Great Lakes region. In particular, we ask that you consider the following requests as you work on the appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13).

- **We urge the Committee to support the FY13 budget request for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).**

The Great Lakes are invaluable national treasures that provide immeasurable benefits to the entire Great Lakes basin and the nation. Almost all of the Great Lakes' waters are a legacy of the glacier age with less than one percent renewed annually by precipitation and run off. They hold 90 percent of the U.S. surface fresh water and are the largest system of fresh surface water on earth. Over 40 million people currently rely on the Great Lakes for drinking water, and the global water demand is expected to double every 21 years. The Great Lakes also provide immense economic benefits. An estimated 1.5 million jobs are directly connected to the Great Lakes and the Great Lakes region is responsible for approximately 27 percent of our nation's gross domestic product (GDP).

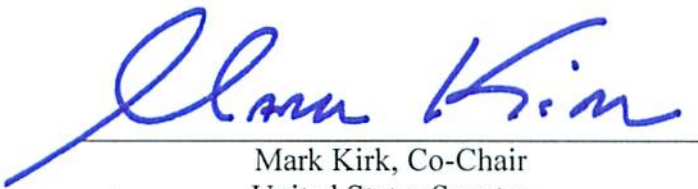
The GLRI allocates funding for an inter-agency initiative to address problems such as invasive species, non-point source pollution and contaminated sediment. Each year the GLRI receives more grant applications than the program can readily support to help clean up the Great Lakes. Continued support is needed in order to address urgent issues identified in the GLRI Action Plan: (1) cleaning up toxics and areas of concern; (2) combating invasive species; (3) promoting nearshore health by protecting watersheds from polluted run-off; (4) restoring wetlands and other habitats; and (5) tracking progress and working with strategic partners.

- **We urge the Committee to provide support for the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program.**

The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act implements proposals that restore the fish and wildlife resources in the Great Lakes Basin based on the Great Lakes Fishery Restoration Study. The programs also authorize competitive grants to encourage cooperative conservation, restoration and management of the fish and wildlife resources and their habitat in the Great Lakes Basin. This program receives many more competitive grant proposals than the program can support. We urge the Committee to continue to provide support for this important program to help restore and protect fish and wildlife in the Great Lakes region.

The work carried out by the EPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service is critical to the sustainability of the Great Lakes' natural resources. We urge the Committee to carefully consider these requests and thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to have your staff contact Alice Yates (Senator Levin, 202-224-2683) or Sarah Walter (Senator Kirk, 202-224-2854).

Sincerely,



Mark Kirk, Co-Chair
United States Senator



Carl Levin, Co-Chair
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Herb Kohl
United States Senator