



Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition

May 5, 2013

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

The Honorable James Moran
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
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 2014. 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 continuing on projects throughout the region that address the most urgent problems facing them. These projects are delivering results throughout the region: fish and wildlife are returning to places after decades-long absences; businesses are emerging and thriving on restored waterfronts; and people are fishing, kayaking and swimming in restored waterways.

Specifically:

- At the Ashtabula River in Ohio, a sediment cleanup and habitat restoration project has restored the lower two miles of the river and advanced efforts to get it de-listed as a Great Lakes Area of Concern. The project has improved water quality and deepened the river channel, making the lower Ashtabula suitable again for maritime commerce, fishing, and recreation boating.
- The Grand Calumet River, which flows through a heavily industrialized area south of Chicago, was for years considered America's most polluted river. Thanks to a major cleanup, a large wetland was restored and more than 575,000 cubic yards of toxic mud were removed from the Lake Michigan tributary. The restoration project addressed pollution that led to fish consumption advisories, destroyed wildlife habitat, and an array of other environmental problems.
- At Clear Creek in Freedom, New York, excess stream erosion and sediment, in-stream barriers, elevated water temperatures, and competition from invasive fish restricted brook trout to a few tributaries in the watershed. A Great Lakes Restoration Initiative project restored 1,200 linear feet of in-stream habitat and re-established fish passage over a sheet-pile grade control structure, reconnecting six miles of prime trout habitat.

More stories on the nearly 1,500 GLRI-funded projects currently underway can be found at <http://healthylakes.org/successes/restoration-success-stories/>.

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 on the dollar in the federal 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 connected to 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 to stop protecting and restoring 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,

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