



## Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

October 28, 2013

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell  
Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Executive Office of the President  
Washington, DC 20503

*Via Facsimile: 202-395-3888*

Dear Director Burwell:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write to ask that you assure the President's fiscal year 2015 budget proposal provides funding for Great Lakes restoration priorities. The Great Lakes region has received 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 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.

First, we ask you to support \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Restoration efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and work is underway on over 1,700 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:

- The Presque Isle, Pennsylvania, Area of Concern was delisted and the management actions necessary for delisting were completed in the Sheboygan, Wisconsin, AOC. As a result, Sheboygan and other cities have begun debating how to market and develop their cities after years of being pegged as toxic hot spots.
- 21 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) and 12 AOCs were removed, bringing the cumulative removal total to 33, exceeding the GLRI Action Plan target. More BUIs have been removed since the GLRI began in 2010 than between 1987 and 2009.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, NRCS, and NOAA (among others) restored, protected, or enhanced over 90,000 acres of wetlands and other habitat in the Great Lakes.
- 800 river miles were cleared of barriers resulting in fish swimming into stretches of river where they have been absent for decades.
- Farmers implemented conservation practices on nearly 280,000 acres of Great Lakes farms to reduce erosion and nutrient runoff into Great Lakes tributaries.

Second, the GLRI does not address aging sewers that led to nearly 20 billion gallons of sewage being discharged into the Great Lakes in 2011, closing beaches, threatening public health and damaging local economies. Communities depend on the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) for low-interest loans to implement costly wastewater infrastructure projects that seek to stop overflows from happening. Based

on a fixed formula, maintaining level funding for the Clean Water SRF will provide approximately \$500 million for the eight Great Lakes states in 2013. We request that you maintain funding for this important Great Lakes restoration program.

Investments in Great Lakes restoration 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.

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 draft conference report for the fiscal year 2014 appropriations bill for the Department of Interior, Environment and Related Agencies, Congress reminded EPA and its federal partners that “funds are to supplement rather than supplant those funds already being spent on Great Lakes programs prior to the establishment of the initiative.” (Found at: <http://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hrpt-113-hr-fy2014-interior.pdf>; Accessed: 1 October 2013). 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.”

Progress is being made. Now is not the time to scale back our nation's commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy. We understand that pressures on Congress and the Administration to balance the U.S. budget will not diminish, but neither will the problems facing the Great Lakes if we slow down. If we wait and allow restoration efforts to slow, these serious problems will only get worse and the price we pay will be much higher. For the economy and the environment, please make sure that the fiscal year 2015 budget provides at least \$300 million for the GLRI, SRF funding is maintained, and that all agency Great Lakes restoration base budgets are preserved.

If you have questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact our policy director, Chad Lord, at 202-454-3385 or [clord@npsa.org](mailto:clord@npsa.org).

Sincerely,

Joel Brammeier  
President & CEO  
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Katie Rousseau  
Associate Director, Clean Water Supply  
Program  
American Rivers

Erin Crotty  
Executive Director  
Audubon New York

Loren H. Smith  
Executive Director  
Buffalo Audubon Society

Jill Spisiak Jedlicka  
Executive Director and Riverkeeper  
Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper

Amy Holtshouse Brennan  
Director  
Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc.

Brook McDonald  
Chicago Regional Land Conservation Coalition

Mary Smith  
Communications Coordinator  
Church Women United of New York State

Brian Smith  
Program & Communications Director  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Deanna White  
State Director  
Clean Water Action –Minnesota

Anne M. Vaara  
Executive Director  
Clinton River Watershed Council

Amy Beyer  
Director  
Conservation Resource Alliance

Joe Tomandl III  
Program Director  
Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship

Janine Rybka  
District Administrator  
Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District

Rebecca A. Humphries  
Director, Great Lakes/Atlantic Region  
Ducks Unlimited

Howard A. Learner  
Executive Director  
Environmental Law & Policy Center

Jeffrey D. Fullmer  
Watershed and Regulatory Services Coordinator  
FABCO Industries Inc.

Jill Ryan  
Executive Director  
Freshwater Future

Mike Strigel  
Executive Director  
Gathering Waters Conservancy

Vickie Hall  
Executive Director  
Glacial Lakes Conservancy, Inc.

Joy Mulinex  
Director  
Great Lakes States Land Conservancies  
Coalition

Jonathan Jarosz  
Executive Director  
Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation  
Policy

Laura Rubin  
Executive Director  
Huron River Watershed Council

Robert Stegmier  
National Director from Michigan  
Dwight Lydell Chapter  
Izaak Walton League of America.

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

Ivan J Hack Jr  
Headwaters Chapter President  
Izaak Walton League of America

Barry Drazkowski  
President  
Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of  
America

David Zieverink  
President  
Ohio Division of the Izaak Walton League of  
America

Gary Wager  
Executive Director  
Kalamazoo River Cleanup Coalition

Rick Unger  
President  
Lake Erie Charter Boat Association

Tom Fuhrman  
President  
Lake Erie Region Conservancy

Sandy Bihn  
Executive Director  
Lake Erie Waterkeeper Inc.

John Sentell  
President  
Lake Forest Open Lands Association

Patrick DiNicola  
Treasurer  
Lake Ontario trout & Salmon Association

Brian Price  
Executive Director  
Leelanau Conservancy

Lisa Wozniak  
Executive Director  
Michigan League of Conservation Voters

Erin McDonough  
Executive Director  
Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Cheryl Nenn  
Riverkeeper  
Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Scott Strand  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy.

Steve Morse  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Kris William Larson  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Land Trust

Lynn McClure  
Midwest Regional Director  
National Parks Conservation Association

Andy Buchsbaum  
Regional Executive Director  
National Wildlife Federation

Melinda Hughes-Wert  
President  
Nature Abounds

Marc Hudon  
Chair, Water Commission  
Nature Quebec

Ron Urban  
Chairman  
NY Trout Unlimited

Kristy Meyer, M.S.  
Managing Director  
Agricultural, Health & Clean Water Programs  
Ohio Environmental Council

Ray Stewart  
President  
Ohio Wetlands Association

Gerald W. Adelman  
President & CEO  
Openlands

Irene Senn  
Coordinator  
Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes

Denny Caneff  
Executive Director  
River Alliance of Wisconsin

Merritt Frey  
River Habitat Program Director  
River Network

Kimberly A. Gleffe  
Executive Director  
River Revitalization Foundation

Nicole Barker  
Executive Director  
Save the Dunes

Lee Willbanks  
Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper  
Executive Director, Save The River

Martha Rogers Marsh  
President  
Shaker Lakes Garden Club, Zone X

Kristopher Krouse  
Executive Director  
Shirley Heinze Land Trust

Melissa Damaschke  
Great Lakes Program Director  
Sierra Club

Lynda Schneekloth  
Chair  
Sierra Club Niagara Group

Phyllis Tierney  
Coordinator, Justice & Peace Ministry  
Global Environment Committee of the  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester

Lisa Brush  
Executive Director  
The Stewardship Network

Julene Boe  
Executive Director  
St. Louis River Alliance

Todd Holschbach  
Director of Government Relations  
The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin

Jennifer McKay  
Policy Specialist  
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Dendra J. Best  
Executive Director  
Wastewater Education 501(c)3

Ellen Satterlee  
CEO  
The Wege Foundation

Rich Cochran  
President and CEO  
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Bob Fitzwilliam  
Executive Director  
West Wisconsin Land Trust

Kerry Schumann  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

George Meyer  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Cc: The Honorable Gina McCarthy  
Members of the Federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force