



Great Lakes
Commission



Healing Our Waters®
Great Lakes
Coalition



Great Lakes
Fishery
Commission



Great Lakes and
St. Lawrence
Cities Initiative



Chippewa Ottawa
Resource
Authority



Council of
Great Lakes
Industries



Great Lakes
Metro Chambers
Coalition

October 18, 2013

Dear OMB Director Sylvia Mathews Burwell:

We urge you to ensure the President’s fiscal year 2015 budget proposal provides funding for Great Lakes restoration priorities. This includes \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund at its current level. **The Great Lakes states, communities, tribes, conservation organizations, and business and industry are united in supporting these vital and successful efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes, the source of drinking water for over 30 million people.**

The region is implementing a comprehensive strategy to protect and restore the Great Lakes. However, there is still much work that needs to be done. Aging sewers, invasive species, and toxic pollutants are just a few of the persistent threats that impact the region, endangering human and wildlife health, lowering property values, and hurting the region’s economy. Cutting funding now will only slow restoration efforts, allowing problems to get worse and more expensive to solve.

The GLRI is improving the lives of millions of people by addressing the most serious problems facing the Great Lakes through implementation of over 1,500 on-the-ground restoration projects throughout the eight-state region. These projects are cleaning up degraded Areas of Concern, halting Asian carp and other invasive species, and preventing polluted runoff that closes beaches and causes harmful algal blooms. Continued funding will build on the investments underway and help our region “get the job done.”

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. Therefore, the administration must also support the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), which communities depend on for low-interest loans to implement costly wastewater infrastructure projects. 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 2014.

Restoring the Great Lakes is a wise investment that creates jobs, stimulates economic development, and protects freshwater resources on which millions depend. The lakes currently generate over 1.5 million jobs and \$60 billion in wages annually, and provide the foundation for a \$30 billion tourism economy. Looking to the future, the Brookings Institution has projected that fully implementing our Great Lakes restoration strategy will generate over \$50 billion in long-term economic benefits. The lakes are an invaluable resource worth restoring and protecting, and the GLRI and Clean Water SRF are critical to our collective efforts toward this end.

Again, we urge you to include \$300 million for the GLRI and level funding for the Clean Water SRF in the President’s FY 2015 budget proposal. These programs are critically important to sustaining the environmental and economic vitality of the Great Lakes and the surrounding eight-state region.

Sincerely,

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