



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

April 4, 2014

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 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As members of the Great Lakes delegation, we ask for your continued support of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies fiscal year 2015 (FY2015) appropriations bill. Sustaining robust support for this program is critical for the millions of people who depend on the Great Lakes for their drinking water, jobs, and quality of life.

- **We urge the Committee to sustain the current level of funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).**

The GLRI supports a cooperative inter-agency initiative to protect and restore the integrity of the Great Lakes' ecosystem. Projects are focused on solving regional challenges and achieving measurable results. Continued support is needed in order to address urgent priorities identified in the GLRI Action Plan: (1) cleaning up toxic sediments in areas of concern; (2) preventing the introduction and spread of 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.

As national treasures, the Great Lakes are the economic and ecological core of the region. The Great Lakes constitute 95% of the nation's surface freshwater, contain over 200 globally unique animal and plant species, and support a world-class fishery. The Great Lakes also offer tremendous economic benefits supporting more than 1.5 million direct jobs and \$62 billion in annual wages.

The work carried out by the EPA and other federal and non-federal entities through the GLRI is vital for ensuring the long-term health and prosperity of the Great Lakes' region. We appreciate the Committee's past support for this important program and ask for its continued funding. 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