



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

July 14, 2014

Hon. Barbara Boxer, Chair
Environment & Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. David Vitter, Ranking Member
Environment & Public Works Committee
United States Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Benjamin Cardin, Chair
Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife
Environment & Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. John Boozman, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife
Environment & Public Works Committee
United States Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Boxer and Cardin and Ranking Members Vitter and Boozman:

We are writing to convey our support for S. 1232, the **Great Lakes Ecological and Economic Protection Act (GLEEPA) of 2013**, being considered by the Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife. This bipartisan legislation, introduced by the cochairs of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, Senators Carl Levin and Mark Kirk, provides a solid platform to ensure our region continues to work together successfully to implement a science-based and outcomes-focused plan of action for restoring and protecting the Great Lakes; spends resources effectively and transparently; targets funding at the right priorities and the right areas; and engages people, communities and stakeholders who know the problems and their solutions. **This is a top regional priority for the Great Lakes states, local communities, tribes, conservation organizations, and business and industry.**

The Great Lakes Ecological and Economic Protection Act (GLEEPA) establishes a strong regional framework to sustain effective restoration, protection and ongoing management of the Great Lakes. First, GLEEPA formally authorizes the popular, multi-year Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and links its implementation to our regional plans. It does this in part by enhancing regional accountability and transparency through the creation of the Great Lakes Advisory Board, which will recommend restoration priorities that federal agencies use when setting their budgets each year. The bill also increases coordination among federal agencies by establishing the federal Great Lakes Interagency Task Force. While these bodies are already in place, the legislation formalizes their role and provides direction from Congress. Lastly, the bill reauthorizes both the successful Great Lakes Legacy Act, to continue cleaning up contaminated hot spots across the Great Lakes, and the Great Lakes National Program Office, to ensure U.S. EPA has the necessary authority to coordinate Great Lakes restoration efforts.

Passing this legislation now will clarify the focus and accountability of our restoration efforts and ensure the program continues to achieve effective results. We have joined with federal agencies to rewrite the GLRI Action Plan, which guides federal restoration efforts. The new plan lays out our region's restoration goals and objectives, and revises how we measure progress, taking into account recommendations from the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) recent report, which found no major deficiencies in the GLRI and recognized the complexities of guiding this type of large-scale ecosystem restoration program. GLEEPA will establish the legislative framework to implement our updated plan.

Restoring the Great Lakes creates jobs, stimulates economic development, and protects a source of fresh drinking water for 30 million people. 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. **Clearly, the Great Lakes are an invaluable resource worth restoring and protecting, and GLEEPA's provisions are critical to our collective efforts toward this end. We urge you to approve the legislation and pass it on for consideration by the full Senate.**

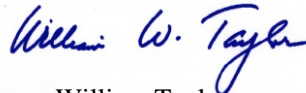
Sincerely,



Tim Eder
Executive Director
Great Lakes
Commission



Todd Ambs
Director
Healing Our Waters-
Great Lakes Coalition



William Taylor
Chair, U.S. Section
Great Lakes
Fishery Commission



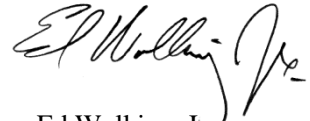
David A. Ullrich
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Jane A. TenEyck
Executive Director
Chippewa Ottawa
Resource Authority



Kathryn A. Buckner
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