



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

March 27, 2015

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and
Related Programs
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and
Related Programs
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

As Senators from Great Lakes states, we are writing to express our support for two programs administered by the State Department that are important to the Great Lakes region. Specifically, we request support for the following programs in the fiscal year 2016 (FY2016) State, Foreign Operations, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

- **In order for the Commission to continue its vital work in the Great Lakes region, we urge the Committee to provide robust support for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission within the International Fisheries Commission account.**

The Great Lakes fisheries are worth over \$7 billion and are home to an estimated 180 species of native fish. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission plays an important role in coordinating fishery management and research across state, provincial, and tribal agencies with the goal of maximizing and sustaining fishery populations in the region. The ongoing work by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to combat and control the spread of invasive species, especially the parasitic sea lamprey, is integral to the health and well-being of the Great Lakes fishery. Without the continued efforts by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, the Great Lakes would experience serious declines in fishery populations at a devastating cost to the regional economy.

- **We urge you to provide continued support for the International Joint Commission (IJC), which receives funding in the American Sections, International Commissions account.**

Established under the 1909 Boundary Waters Treat, the IJC plays a critical intermediary role between the U.S. and Canada to ensure the effective and cooperative management of our shared Great Lakes waters. The IJC is uniquely positioned to respond to international transboundary resource management issues involving the Great Lakes. In 2012, the U.S. and Canada amended the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement to strengthen the two countries' coordinated efforts to tackle issues such as invasive species, toxic substances, lake levels, water and air quality, and pollution prevention. Under this agreement, the IJC plays a central role in

analyzing and sharing information between the U.S. and Canada to help carry out the agreement.

We appreciate your consideration of our requests for the Great Lakes region. If you have any questions, please contact Jon VanderPlas with Sen. Kirk's office (202-224-0350) or Aaron Suntag with Senator Stabenow (202-224-0839).

Sincerely,