



## Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

April 14, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write today in strong support of Plan 2014, a new approach to regulation of the flows of water in the St. Lawrence River and the levels of Lake Ontario. We urge the U.S. Department of State to take the leadership role in securing the approval of the United States government for implementation of Plan 2014 without further delay.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition is a coalition of more than 120 environmental, conservation, and outdoor recreation organizations; zoos, aquariums, and museums. Our member organizations represent millions of people who share a common goal: restoring and protecting North America's greatest freshwater resource, the Great Lakes

Our Coalition believes that Plan 2014 will result in significant economic benefits, restore the coastal environment, and maintain the protections for shoreline property provided by current regulation. Plan 2014 is an excellent compromise that will restore 64,000 acres of coastal wetlands – an area three times the size of Manhattan – while taking the needs of other interests, including hydropower, commercial shipping, recreational boating, and coastal property, into account.

The potential benefits of the compromise solution represented by Plan 2014 are significant and clear: the plan will produce enough additional hydropower to meet the needs of 8,000 homes; commercial shipping will retain its current benefits; more natural ebb and flow of water levels will unleash a huge wetland restoration project – the largest such restoration outside the Everglades – at minimal public expense; restored coastal habitats will bring over \$9 million in annual added value from improved hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing to the New York economy; and over 92 percent of the benefits to shoreline property from current regulation will be retained with no increased risk of flooding.

Further, we note how Plan 2014 responds to the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC), which engaged hundreds of stakeholders throughout the Great Lakes Basin in a comprehensive vision for restoration of the Great Lakes. The GLRC's restoration strategy (2005) now provides the guidance for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI); it calls for extensive efforts to protect and restore wetlands, particularly coastal wetlands. The 64,000 acres restored by Plan 2014, at minimal public expense, will achieve 12 percent of the strategy's basin-wide goal of 550,000 wetland acres restored and protected. Current regulation, in contrast, impedes the progress of restoration and the effectiveness of federal investment in ecosystem health through the GLRI.

As you know, the International Joint Commission recommended Plan 2014 in June 2014 to the federal governments of the United States and Canada. This modern approach is designed to replace the current regulation plan, which was developed in the 1950s, long before the modern analytical tools and technology used to develop Plan 2014 were available. Plan 2014 is firmly based on detailed

understanding of the interaction between water supplies, water levels, wave action, and the coastal impacts of storms with thorough consideration for the uncertainties of climate change.

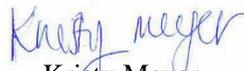
Plan 2014 achieves a balance among the needs of the various interests considered by the IJC, and so it is not surprising that some interests seek to tip this balance more toward their ideal view. However, we strongly caution against altering Plan 2014's compromise solution, which will inevitably diminish its considerable environmental and economic benefits. Such short-sighted alteration would sacrifice an opportunity for enlightened public policy that will not come again for another generation.

We urge the Department of State to take the leadership role in securing the approval of the United States government for implementation of Plan 2014 without further delay.

Please do not hesitate to contact Chad Lord, our coalition's policy director, at 202-454-3385 or [clord@npca.org](mailto:clord@npca.org) with questions.

Sincerely,

  
Lynn McClure  
Co-chair

  
Kristy Meyer  
Co-chair

  
Nicole Barker  
Co-chair