



Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

April 6, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
SH-125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
SD-131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write to ask that you to support funding for Great Lakes restoration priorities in fiscal year 2016. The Great Lakes region has received much-needed support, and we are seeing on-the-ground results in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

First, we ask you to support \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Restoration efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and work is underway on over 2,000 restoration projects throughout the region that will restore the Great Lakes and address the most urgent problems facing them. These projects are cleaning up drinking water flowing to millions of homes and thousands of industries and improving infrastructure important for future economic growth in the eight-state region. These projects are delivering results, including:

- Two Areas of Concern – Deer Lake, Mich. and White Lake, Mich. – were delisted last year. The Presque Isle, Pa., Area of Concern was delisted in 2013. The management actions necessary for delisting Waukegan Harbor, Ill., Sheboygan Harbor, Wis., and the Ashtabula River, Ohio, have also been completed. The GLRI has accelerated the cleanup of toxic hotspots by delisting three formerly contaminated sites—in the previous two decades before the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, only one site had been delisted.
- Between 2010 and 2014, 52 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) at 13 AOCs were removed in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, more than tripling the total number of BUIs removed in the preceding 22 years. More BUIs have been removed since the GLRI began than between 1987 and 2009.
- From 2004 to 2009, the Great Lakes region was the only area in the country to show a gain in wetland acreage. Now the GLRI is building on that foundation with a goal to restore one million acres in the basin. So far, the FWS, NPS, NRCS, and NOAA (among others) have restored, protected, or enhanced over 115,000 acres of wetlands and other habitat.
- 3,400 river-miles were cleared of over 250 barriers resulting in fish swimming into stretches of river where they have been absent for decades.

- Based on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service monitoring, GLRI-sponsored actions are increasing self-sustaining populations of 13 non-endangered and non-threatened native species important to the Great Lakes. For example, efforts in the Saginaw River watershed have contributed to the now self-sustaining walleye population in Saginaw Bay, Mich.

Second, the GLRI does not address aging sewers that discharge billions of gallons of sewage into the Great Lakes, closing beaches, threatening public health, and damaging local economies. Communities depend on the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) for low-interest loans to implement costly wastewater infrastructure projects that seek to stop overflows from happening. 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 2015. We request that you maintain current funding (\$1.45 billion) for this important Great Lakes restoration program.

Investments in Great Lakes restoration create short-term jobs and lead to long-term economic benefits for the Great Lakes states and the country. A Brookings Institution report shows that every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration generates \$2 in return, making Great Lakes restoration one of the best investments for the federal dollar in the budget. More recent research from Grand Valley State University suggests that the return for certain projects may be closer to 6-to-1. The University of Michigan has also demonstrated that over 1.5 million jobs are dependent on clean and healthy Great Lakes, accounting for more than \$60 billion in wages annually. We have also seen jobs being created by our nation's efforts to clean up the Great Lakes and restore fish and wildlife habitat. These jobs include wetland scientists, electricians, engineers, landscape architects, plumbers, truck drivers and many others.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done. Aging sewers, invasive species, and toxic pollutants are just a few of the pervasive threats that impact the region, endangering human and wildlife health, lowering property values, and hurting the region's economy. Cutting funding will slow restoration efforts, allowing problems to get worse and making them more expensive to solve. Ultimately, cutting spending on the Great Lakes won't save money—it will cost the nation more. As the source of drinking water for 30 million people, the nation cannot afford to not protect and restore the Great Lakes.

Progress is being made. Now is not the time to scale back our nation's commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy. If we wait and allow restoration efforts to slow, these serious problems will only get worse and the price we pay will be much higher. For the economy and the environment, please make sure that the fiscal year 2016 budget provides at least \$300 million for the GLRI, SRF funding is maintained, and that all agency Great Lakes restoration base budgets are preserved.

If you have questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact our policy director, Chad Lord, at 202-454-3385 or clord@npca.org.

Sincerely,

Joel Brammeier
President & CEO
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Gary Belan
Senior Director, Clean Water Supply Program
American Rivers

Erin Crotty
Executive Director
Audubon New York

Loren H. Smith
Executive Director
Buffalo Audubon Society

Jill Jedlicka
Executive Director &
Riverkeeper
Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper

Mary Smith
Communications Coordinator
Church Women United in New York State

Brian Smith
Associate Executive Director
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Deanna White
State Director
Clean Water Action of Minnesota

Mark Redsten
CEO
Clean Wisconsin

Anne M. Vaara
Executive Director
Clinton River Watershed Council

Deb Yandala
CEO
The Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National
Park

Jean Pogge
CEO
Delta Institute

Suzanne Moynihan,
Director
The EDGE

Ally Fields
Clean Water Advocate
Environment America

Chuck Godfrey
President
Erie County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

Jill Ryan
Executive Director
Freshwater Future

Kerry Kelly
Chairman of Board
Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes National
Lakeshore

Matt Meersman
President
Friends of the St. Joe River Association

Mike Strigel
Executive Director
Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for
Land Trusts

June Summers
President
Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Jonathan Jarosz
Executive Director
Heart of the Lakes Center for Land Conservation
Policy

Sr. Rose Therese Nolta, SSpS
Justice and Peace Coordinator
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters - USA – JPIC

Laura Rubin
Executive Director
Huron River Watershed Council

Darwin Adams
Chairman
Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited

Mike Leahy
Conservation Director
Izaak Walton League of America

John Stegmeier
Conservation Chair
Dwight Lydell Chapter of the Izaak Walton
League of America

Ivan J Hack Jr
President
Headwaters Chapter IWLA

Tim Russell
Division President
Indiana Division Izaak Walton League

Robert Stegmier
National Director, Michigan
Izaak Walton League of America

Les Monostory
President, New York State Division
Izaak Walton League of America

Jim Sweeney
President
Porter County Chapter of the Izaak Walton
League of America

Michelle Parker
Vice President
Great Lakes and Sustainability
Daniel P. Haerther Center for Conservation and
Research
John G. Shedd Aquarium

Alan J Weener
President
Kalamazoo River Sturgeon for Tomorrow

Tom Fuhrman
President
Lake Erie Region Conservancy

Sandy Bihn
Executive Director
Lake Erie Waterkeeper Inc

Gordon Morlan
Environmental Chairman
League of Women Voters Grosse Pointe

Betsy Lawson
Senior Lobbyist
League of Women Voters of the United States

Nic Clark
Director
Michigan Clean Water Action

Daniel Eichinger
Executive Director
Michigan United Conservation Clubs

John J Ropp
President/CEO
Michigan Wildlife Conservancy

Cheryl Nenn
Riverkeeper
Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Scott Strand
Executive Director
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Gary Botzek
Executive Director
Minnesota Conservation Federation

Steve Morse
Executive Director
Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Lynn McClure
Senior Midwest Director
National Parks Conservation Association

Karen Hobbs
Senior Policy Analyst
Natural Resources Defense Council

Mike Shriberg
Regional Executive Director, Great Lakes
National Wildlife Federation

Melinda Hughes-Wert
President
Nature Abounds

Marc Hudon
Chair, Water Commission
Nature Quebec

Vincent Agnello
Executive Secretary
Niagara Watershed Alliance

Dennis West
President
Northern Initiatives

Dan Plath
President
Northwest Indiana Paddling Association

Michael Ryan
President
Northwest Indiana Steelheaders

Ron Urban
Chairman
NYS Council Trout Unlimited

Kristy Meyer
Managing Director, Agricultural, Health &
Clean Water Programs
Ohio Environmental Council

Ray Stewart
President
Ohio Wetlands Association

Kris Patterson
Executive Director
Partners for Clean Streams

David Masur
Director
PennEnvironment

Irene Senn
Coordinator
Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes

Denny Caneff
Executive Director
River Alliance of Wisconsin

Nicole Silk
President
River Network

Nicole Barker
Executive Director
Save the Dunes.

Lee Willbanks
Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper
Executive Director
Save The River

Robin Schachat
President
Shaker Lakes Garden Club

Melissa Damaschke
Great Lakes Program Director
Sierra Club

Karen Donahue
Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Community
Justice Team

Sister Phyllis Tierney
Coordinator, SSJ Justice & Peace Ministry
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester

Rafael Rosa
Regional Vice President
Student Conservation Association

Jennifer McKay
Policy Specialist
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Carol A. Stepien
Director of the Lake Erie Center
University of Toledo

Christine Crissman
Executive Director
The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay

Antoinette Grote
President
Western NY Trout Unlimited, Chapter #068

Ellen Satterlee
President and Executive Director
The Wege Foundation

Rich Cochran
President and CEO
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Kerry Schumann
Executive Director
Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters

Tracy Hames
Executive Director
Wisconsin Wetlands Association