



Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

September 12, 2017

Dear Senator:

As the appropriations process moves forward, we write to ask that you continue to support funding for Great Lakes priorities like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds. We are pleased that the House has proposed level funding for the GLRI and Drinking Water SRF. We are disappointed that it proposed a cut to wastewater infrastructure investments.

However, even with funding for these three programs, Great Lakes restoration and protection could still stall if other programs and the ability of agencies to implement them, which serve as the foundation for our efforts, is ignored. We ask that you keep this in mind as you make important budget decisions this fall.

The President's fiscal year 2018 budget served as a wakeup call that we cannot ignore the programs that federal agencies use to get GLRI and other federal funds onto the ground in the region. The GLRI was set up to supplement existing federal programs. The structure set up in 2010 has been successful according to the Government Accountability Office and shown tremendous results:

- Through the EPA's Great Lakes Legacy Act, the GLRI has been pivotal in the delisting of three Areas of Concern. Around the region, more than triple the beneficial use impairments in Areas of Concern have been removed in the seven years since the GLRI began than in the preceding 22 years combined. Sheboygan, Wisconsin; Buffalo, New York; and Muskegon, Michigan are reimagining their lakefronts and using the cleaned up areas to power their economies through increased property values and development.
- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been able to leverage GLRI funding with other Farm Bill programs to help farmers implement conservation action on more than one million acres of rural lands resulting in reduced erosion and less farm runoff, both of which feed the algal blooms that have devastated Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay and Green Bay. Reducing nitrogen and phosphorus reduces the costs of Toledo and other cities, and avoids losses small business assume when algal blooms scare away tourists and other travelers.
- FWS and NOAA have funneled GLRI funds through existing programs to remove more than 513 dams and barriers, allowing the fish that support a \$7 billion sport fishery to access more than 3,800 miles of river. Hunting, angling, paddling, and hiking are big business and benefit from increased access to special places outdoors.
- The Army Corps and FWS are working from their own base funds to provide federal leadership on Asian carp prevention efforts by operating the electric barriers and planning the next phase of prevention efforts.

We are grateful that Congress acknowledges this success and appears ready to reject many of the President's proposed budget cuts. For example, the House Appropriations Committee maintained funding for many important programs that are used with the GLRI throughout the region, like EPA's Sec. 106 and Sec. 319 programs and its Beach Act program; the Fish and Wildlife Service's North American

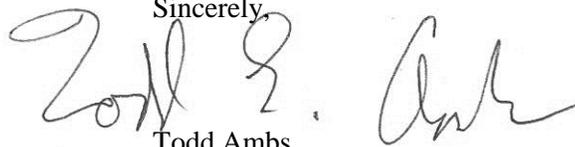
Wetlands Conservation and Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration programs; NOAA's Sea Grant program; and the Army Corps Asian carp defensive efforts.

Even with the restoration of funding for some programs, we are still concerned about the impacts that budget cuts could have on our restoration efforts as a result of deep budget cutting across federal agencies. Significant cuts across agencies like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) could weaken the ability of these agencies to partner with the region and utilize their programs to get work done. These federal agencies are critical partners with Great Lakes states, cities, industries, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations in completing successful projects. Through effective program implementation, they support the successful restoration of a drinking water source for over 30 million people.

We know that Congress has many competing priorities. We deeply appreciate the Great Lakes delegation's commitment to the GLRI. Maintaining funding for this successful program and water infrastructure investments are vital if we are to continue achieving results. However, support for the GLRI and the SRFs is not enough if we are to maintain progress. Great Lakes restoration and protection could still be severely hampered if other programs and agencies that are key to implementing the restoration work see their funding levels cut. We ask you to join us in supporting Great Lakes restoration across the federal budget as you make budget choices this fall.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Ambs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Todd Ambs
Coalition Director