

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 23, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director, Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

As you work on the Administration's fiscal year 2019 budget, we ask you to include \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The GLRI enjoys bipartisan and bicameral support in Congress, and was recently reauthorized through FY2021 at \$300 million annually (P.L. 114-322). The Great Lakes are a national treasure and internationally important, providing drinking water for 40 million people and contributing \$10 billion in tourism each year. The momentum and partnerships of the GLRI program, which are helping to protect and restore the Great Lakes, must be maintained.

As you know, our region is successfully undertaking one of the nation's largest restoration efforts, an effort the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency says is producing results. In the most recent Great Lakes Restoration Initiative report to Congress and the President, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt wrote that the GLRI "is protecting public health in the Great Lakes more than any other coordinated interagency effort in U.S. history, and helping to ensure that our children and their children live in safer, healthier communities." Since its inception in 2010, \$1.7 billion has been used to fund over 3,400 projects to combat the greatest threats to the Great Lakes, including invasive species, harmful algal blooms and loss of fish and wildlife habitats.

We see this every day in the Great Lakes states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin:

- The GLRI has led to the delisting of three Areas of Concern and more than tripled the cleanup of beneficial use impairments in several others since the GLRI began. 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.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service leverages GLRI funding with other Farm Bill programs to implement conservation actions on more than one million acres of farm lands resulting in reduced soil erosion and less farm runoff, both of which contribute to the algal blooms in Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay, and Green Bay.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have removed more than 513 dams and barriers, allowing the fish that support a \$7

billion 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 combining their own base funds with GLRI money to enhance federal leadership on Asian carp prevention efforts by operating the electric barriers and planning the next phase of prevention efforts, which benefits not only the Great Lakes but states along the Mississippi River as well.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done. Aging sewers, invasive species, harmful algal blooms, and toxic pollutants are just a few of the pervasive threats that impact the region. 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 40 million people, the nation cannot afford to stop protecting and restoring the Great Lakes.

Now is not the time to scale back our nation's commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy. Because of the partnership we have with federal agencies our region is making progress and seeing results. The GLRI is a locally driven restoration effort and its success depends on the collaboration between all levels of government and with industrial, commercial, and non-governmental partners. We again ask that you include \$300 million for the GLRI in next year's budget request.

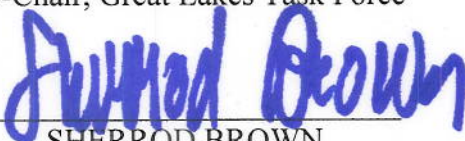
Sincerely,



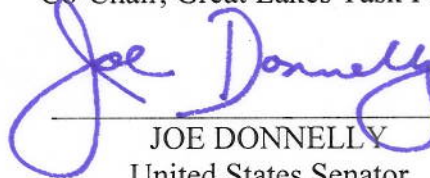
DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senator
Co-Chair, Great Lakes Task Force



ROB PORTMAN
United States Senator
Co-Chair, Great Lakes Task Force



SHERROD BROWN
United States Senator




JOE DONNELLY
United States Senator



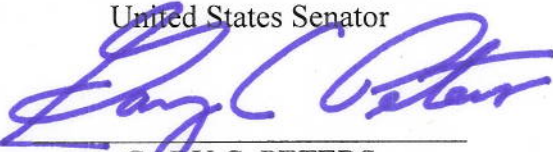
RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator



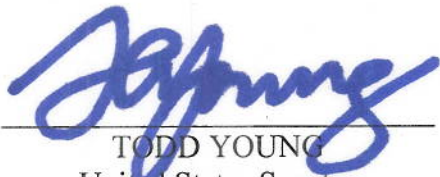
ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr.
United States Senator



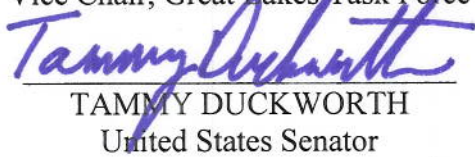
AL FRANKEN
United States Senator



GARY C. PETERS
United States Senator



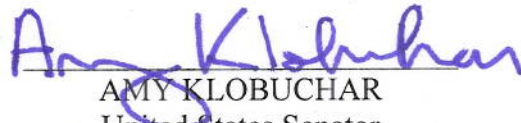
TODD YOUNG
United States Senator
Vice Chair, Great Lakes Task Force



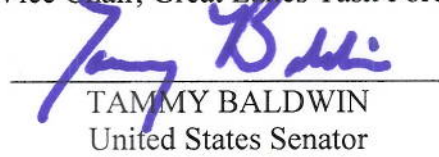
TAMMY DUCKWORTH
United States Senator



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator



AMY KLOBUCHAR
United States Senator
Vice Chair, Great Lakes Task Force



TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senator

Cc: Scott Pruitt, Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency