



April 15, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
HT-2 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Rogers:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write to ask that you assure the Fiscal Year 2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill provides funding for Great Lakes restoration priorities. We are grateful for the much-needed support the region has received. We share these waters with our Canadian neighbors and our joint efforts are seeing on-the-ground results because of the investments across the region on both sides of the border. However, the Great Lakes still face many urgent problems, which is why we are concerned with the President's proposed budget. The problems we face will only get worse and the price we pay will be much higher if the federal and international partnership in the region is scaled back.

First, we ask the subcommittee to support the efforts of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The Department of State is an important contributor to this effort, coordinating our international partnership to protect these waters without which critical restoration targets could not be met. Ongoing efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and the GLRI has undertaken or completed 4,706 restoration projects throughout the region. These projects are benefiting communities by cleaning up waters that are the drinking source for millions of homes and thousands of industries. Results, include:

- Three Areas of Concern – Presque Isle, Pa.; Deer Lake, Mich.; and White Lake, Mich. – have been delisted since the GLRI began. The management actions necessary to delist 11 additional AOCs have also been completed. In the previous two decades before the GLRI, only one AOC had been cleaned up.
- 73 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) were addressed in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin under the GLRI, more than six times the total number of BUIs removed in the preceding 22 years. More BUIs have been removed under the GLRI than between 1987 and 2009.
- Combined with other funding, farmers implemented conservation action on more than 750,000 acres of rural lands through 2017 to reduce erosion and farm runoff that feeds toxic algal

outbreaks. GLRI's supplemental funding helped double farmland under conservation around Western Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay, and Green Bay, reducing projected phosphorus runoff by nearly 770,000 pounds.

- Over 5,000 river miles have been cleared of dams and barriers resulting in fish swimming into stretches of river where they have been absent for decades.

Second, we ask you to support the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. Canada and the U.S. share this valuable resource that boasts a fishery worth more than \$7 billion annually to the region, in addition to providing drinking water to 30 million Americans and supporting nearly one-third of U.S. and Canadian economic activity. Working together to protect this fishery is an essential step in ensuring the continued restoration of the waters and the region, in addition to safeguarding a sustainable and thriving economic future. We urge you to reject the administration's proposed cut to the Commission's budget and fund its work at \$37 million in the new fiscal year.

Working together with our neighbors results in greater coordinated investments in Great Lakes restoration, which creates jobs and leads to long-term economic benefits for the Great Lakes states and the country. A report last fall from economists at the University of Michigan, Central Michigan University, and Duke University demonstrated that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's (GLRI) ecological investments are resulting in significant economic benefits. The study showed that for every \$1 the GLRI invested through 2016 to clean up toxic hot spots in Areas of Concern (AOC), control invasive species, restore wildlife habitat, protect wetlands, and reduce harmful algae the investment will produce more than \$3 in additional economic activity regionwide through 2036 (more in some cities-see chart). This new research demonstrated that the GLRI is creating new real estate and commercial development--particularly in waterfront areas. This development has resulted in a resurgence in water-based, outdoor recreation and increasing tourism across the region, increasing housing options and home values, and an increasing number of young people staying in or relocating to Great Lakes communities. A combined effort that cannot be accomplished without engaging and coordinating fully with the Canadian government, Provinces, communities, and tribes.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done. 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 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. Progress is being made and we are seeing results. For the economy and the environment, please make sure that the fiscal year 2020 appropriations bills provide at least \$300 million for the GLRI and fund the coordinating efforts of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

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,

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