



March 2, 2020

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
SD-127
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
SH-125
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Leahy:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write to ask that you assure the Fiscal Year 2021 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 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 over 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 critical fisheries and invasive species management efforts at \$48 million in the new fiscal year.

Second, we ask the Committee 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 over 5,300 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.
- 80 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) were addressed in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin under the GLRI, more than seven times the total number of BUIs removed in the preceding 22 years.
- Combined with other funding, farmers have implemented nutrient management actions on nearly 2 million acres of rural lands through 2017 to reduce erosion and farm runoff that feeds toxic algal outbreaks. GLRI’s supplemental funding is helping increase farmland under conservation around Western Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay, and Green Bay, reducing projected phosphorus runoff by over 1.1 million pounds.
- Over 5,250 river miles have been cleared of dams and barriers resulting in fish swimming into stretches of river where they have been absent for decades.

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. It is estimated 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. The GLRI is revitalizing our waterfronts and leading a resurgence in water-based outdoor recreation, increasing tourism across the region. 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. 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. Moreover, emerging contaminants and a changing climate continue to exacerbate the challenges we face, many of which disproportionately impact people that have historically borne the brunt of environmental injustice. Cutting funding will slow restoration efforts, allowing problems to get worse and making them more expensive to solve. Ultimately, cutting spending as proposed won’t save money—it will cost the nation more. As the source of drinking water for over 40 million Americans and Canadians, 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 the region stands ready to continue this important federal partnership, ensuring that all benefit from and enjoy these investments in restoration and protection. We urge you to ensure that the fiscal year 2021 appropriations bills fund the efforts of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission at \$48 million, in addition to providing at least \$350 million for the GLRI.

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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