



March 2, 2020

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
SD-131
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
SD-125
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write to ask that you assure the Fiscal Year 2021 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill provides funding for Great Lakes restoration priorities. We are grateful for the much needed support the region has received. We are seeing on-the-ground results because of the investments in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. 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 partnership with the region is scaled back.

First, we ask you to support at least \$350 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). Restoration efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and work is underway or completed on more than 5,300 restoration projects throughout the region. These projects are benefiting communities by cleaning up the source of drinking water for over 30 million Americans. Because of GLRI investments, we're seeing impressive results:

- 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.

Second, we ask you to support other Great Lakes programs that are the foundation upon which the success of the GLRI is built. We support the continued investment in the Great Lakes Science Center, a facility operated by the U.S. Geological Survey for essential ecosystem assessment and fisheries management research. We urge you to support the Science Center's work at \$17.5 million in the new fiscal year. Furthermore, the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act grant program operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service enhances cooperative conservation and regional habitat restoration efforts. The program in recent years has funded state and local efforts to restore fish and wildlife habitats and improve water quality in addition to providing grants for dam removals and wetland restorations. We support funding the program at \$8 million to address the great need that exists. Previous funding levels only supported 17% of proposals between 2011 and 2018.

Third, the threat of aquatic invasive species, like Asian carp, is real and persistent in our region. We urge Congress to provide \$50 million for the establishment of the new Great Lakes and Lake Champlain Invasive Species Monitoring program as authorized by the Frank LoBiondo Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-282). Funding the program will be a critical step in coordinating efforts to monitor and detect the introduction and spread of aquatic nuisance species into and within both systems, as well as informing, assisting, and managing prevention and response actions. Furthermore, to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes we ask Congress to fully fund all actions taken as part of the FY2019 Asian Carp Action Plan, adjusted to reflect the Asian carp threat and agency need, and sustain funding for existing programs. For example, we support \$25 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to continue leading monitoring efforts and implementing control and eradication tools and techniques. We also support \$11 million for the U.S. Geological Survey to fund further research into early detection practices and control technologies critical to slowing and responding to the range expansion of these threats to the basin.

Fourth, the successes of Great Lakes restoration efforts are based upon an array of critical national and other federal programs. Without these our region will fall short of our restoration goals, particularly if the federal agencies that are vital partners in our region see significant cuts to their essential functions. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Park Service, and other bureaus within the Department of the Interior work hand in hand with Great Lakes states, cities, industries, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations. In providing critical administrative and programmatic support they help us ensure the success of both the GLRI and other restoration activities. Cuts to programs at the EPA and the Department of the Interior as proposed by the administration that are critical to protecting our waters, conserving our natural resources, and safeguarding public health are unacceptable.

Of great concern are the proposed cuts to programs that seek to address the growing need for water infrastructure investment. Communities across the Great Lakes region continue to grapple with crumbling, antiquated drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and are faced with a staggering \$179 billion in needed improvements, upgrades, and repairs over the next 20 years. The problem in urban and rural water systems and in economically disadvantaged communities is particularly acute, underscoring an urgency to address these issues for everyone. Sewer overflows pour millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Great Lakes and lead drinking water pipes threaten the health of families. The Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs) are two key sources of funds that communities depend on for financing to implement costly, but critical, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure projects necessary to address these threats. We urge you to fund both the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund to \$3.4 billion and \$2.32 billion respectively.

Support underserved communities drinking water needs by providing \$25.4 million for the Small and Disadvantaged Communities Grant program. Additionally, we ask that Congress fully fund the EPA Sec. 221 Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grants program at \$225 million. These grants will directly help localities finance and sustainably address the threat of sewer overflows and polluted stormwater runoff to our waterways.

Furthermore, an array of grant programs administered by the EPA are essential in providing clean drinking water and improving infrastructure important for economic growth. We urge Congress to continue to fund the EPA Sec. 106 and 319 programs at \$231 and \$200 million respectively. Cutting or eliminating these categorical grants, as the budget request proposes, would eliminate hundreds of federally funded positions in state agencies that have the delegated responsibility to enforce critical laws like the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. This would hamper the ability of states to develop and operate their water quality standards, NPDES permit systems, and nonpoint source management programs; all programs critical to public.

Investments in Great Lakes restoration create jobs and lead 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.

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 30 million Americans, 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. 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,

Marjorie Mulcahy
Member
Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie

Molly Flanagan
Vice President, Policy
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Ted Illston
Senior Director, Policy and Government
Relations
American Rivers

Mike Leonard
Vice President of Government Affairs
American Sportfishing Association

Marnie Urso
Policy Director
Audubon Great Lakes

Erin McGrath
Policy Manager
Audubon New York

Tom Conway
Regional Program Manager
BlueGreen Alliance

Lauren J Makeyenko
Interim Executive Director
Buffalo Audubon Society

Jill Jedlicka
Executive Director
Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Mary Smith
Communications Director
Church Women United in New York State

Brian Smith
Associate Executive Director
Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Steve Schultz
Water Program Coordinator
Clean Water Action Minnesota

Mark Redsten
President
Clean Wisconsin

Bryan Stubbs
Executive Director
Cleveland Water Alliance

James E. Barr
President
Coalition of Rainbow Alliances

Rob Mrowka
President
Concerned Citizens of Cattaraugus County

Nels Paulsen

Policy Director
Conservation Minnesota
Michele Arquette-Palermo
Head of the Freshwater Forum
Cranbrook Institute of Science

James E. Barr
President
Decatur Area Retired Teachers Association

Paul Rosenberger
Secretary
Decatur Audubon Society

James E. Barr
Secretary
Decatur Pride

William Schleizer
CEO
Delta Institute

Sister Mary Brigid Clingman, OP
Promoter of Justice
Dominican Sisters-Grand Rapids

Kyle Rorah
Regional Director of Public Policy
Ducks Unlimited

Nathan Murphy
State Director
Environment Michigan

Howard Learner
Executive Director
Environmental Law & Policy Center

Kelly Thayer
Deputy Director
FLOW (For Love of Water)

Kristy Meyer
Associate Director
Freshwater Future

Marie McCormick
Executive Director
Friends of the Rouge

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

June Summers
President
Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Kelli Paige
Chief Executive Officer
Great Lakes Observing System

Susan Johnson
Advocate and Board Member
Green-Rock Audubon Society

Ivan J Hack Jr
Headwaters Chapter president IWLA
Headwaters Chapter Izaak Walton League of
America

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

Brad Jensen
Executive Director
Huron Pines

Rebecca Esselman
Executive Director
Huron River Watershed Council

Charlie Palmgren
President
Illinois Division of the Izaak Walton League

Edward L Michael
Govt Affairs SubCom Chair
Illinois Council Trout Unlimited

Jennifer Walling
Executive Director
Illinois Environmental Council

Jim Sweeney
Chairmen of Legislative Committee
Indiana Division of the Izaak Walton League

Gene Hopkins
President
Indiana Sportsmen's Roundtable

Emily A Wood
Executive Director
Indiana Wildlife Federation

Rick Graham
National Great Lakes Committee Chairman
Izaak Walton League of America

Elaine Graham
Ohio Division President
Izaak Walton League of America

Alicia Smith
Director
Junction Coalition

Dayle Harrison
President
Kalamazoo River Protection Association

David Spangler
Vice President
Lake Erie Charter Boat Assn.

James Kettler
Director of Projects
Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership

Debra Cronmiller
Executive Director
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

Amy Trotter
Executive Director
Michigan United Conservation Clubs

John Ropp
President/CEO
Michigan Wildlife Conservancy

Tony Wilkin Gibart
Executive Director
Midwest Environmental Advocates

Cheryl Nenn

Riverkeeper
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Brenda Coley
Co-Executive Director
Milwaukee Water Commons

Steve Morse
Executive Director
Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Craig Sterle
Past President
MN Division of the Izaak Walton League of
America

Julie Hill-Gabriel
Vice President, Water
National Audubon Society

Lynn McClure
Senior Director
National Parks Conservation Association

Mike Shriberg
Regional Executive Director, Great Lakes
National Wildlife Federation

Melinda Hughes
President
Nature Abounds

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

Michael J Ryan
Vice President
NWI Steelheaders Inc.

Peter Bucher
Managing Director of Water Policy
Ohio Environmental Council

Alison R Kocek
President
Onondaga Audubon

Kristina Patterson
Executive Director
Partners for Clean Streams

Irene Senn
Coordinator
Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes

Raj Shukla
Executive Director
River Alliance of Wisconsin

Le Lind
President
Save Lake Superior Association

Lori Andresen
President
Save Our Sky Blue Waters

Natalie Johnson
Executive Director
Save the Dunes

John Peach
Executive Director
Save The River Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper

Jill Macek
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Schlitz Audubon Nature Center

Andrea Densham
Senior Director Policy
Shedd Aquarium

Dalal Aboulhosn
Deputy Legislative Director
Sierra Club

Erma Leaphart
Associate Organizer
Sierra Club Great Lakes Program

Phyllis Tierney
Coordinator, SSJ Justice & Peace Office
Sisters of St Joseph of Rochester Global
Environment Committee

Veronique Wiedower CSC
President
Sisters of the Holy Cross

Mike Kelly
Director, Great Lakes Office
The Conservation Fund

Lisa Brush
Executive Director
The Stewardship Network

Jennifer McKay
Policy Director
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council

Taylor Ridderbusch
Great Lakes Organizer
Trout Unlimited

Bill Wood
Executive Director
West Michigan Environmental Action Council

Steve Berk
Director of Public Policy
Western Reserve Land Conservancy

George Guyant
Great Lakes Committee Chair
Wisconsin Division - Izaak Walton League of
America

Diane Lembck
President
Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society

Mike Kuhr
State Council Chair
Wisconsin Trout Unlimited

Tracy Hames
Executive Director
Wisconsin Wetlands Association