



December 15, 2021

Acting Director Shalanda Young,

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition and 63 of our member organizations, we write to urge the Administration fully fund the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) at no less than \$400 million in the President's Fiscal Year 2023 Budget request.

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. The GLRI is improving the lives of millions of people and work is underway or completed on more than 6,000 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 are seeing impressive results:

- Five Areas of Concern – Presque Isle, Pa.; Deer Lake, Mich.; White Lake, Mich.; Lower Menominee River, Mich. & Wisc.; and Ashtabula River, OH. – have been delisted since the GLRI began. The management actions necessary to delist 10 additional AOCs have also been completed. In the previous two decades before the GLRI, only one AOC had been cleaned up.
- 92 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) were addressed in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin under the GLRI, nine times the total number of BUIs removed in the preceding 22 years.
- Combined with other funding, farmers have implemented nutrient management actions on over 2 million acres of rural lands reducing erosion and farm runoff that feeds toxic algal outbreaks. GLRI funding is helping increase farmland under conservation to reduce projected phosphorus runoff by over 1.5 million pounds and developing urban runoff projects that have captured more than 274 million gallons of untreated urban runoff.
- Over 5,400 river miles have been cleared of dams and barriers resulting in fish swimming into stretches of river where they have been absent for decades. More than 440,000 acres of habitat have been protected, restored, or enhanced.

These investments create jobs and lead to long-term economic benefits for the region. 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 more than \$3 in additional economic activity resulted regionwide through 2036. The GLRI is revitalizing our waterfronts and leading a resurgence in water-based outdoor recreation, increasing tourism across the region.

However, the Great Lakes still face urgent problems, and much work needs to be done. Dwindling habitat, invasive species, and toxic pollutants threaten 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. Allowing these problems to get worse will only put our communities at risk and make them more expensive to solve. The Administration must continue the federal commitment to the region by fully funding the GLRI at \$400 million in FY2023.

As the source of drinking water for over 30 million Americans and the heart of our regional economy, the nation cannot afford to stop protecting and restoring the Great Lakes. 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 Senior Legislative Analyst, Alexis Lopez-Cepero, at [alopez-cepero@npca.org](mailto:alopez-cepero@npca.org).

Sincerely,

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