



December 10, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madame Speaker and Mr. Majority Leader:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition, we strongly urge that as you move forward with an economic recovery package for our nation, you include at least \$262.0 million in 2009 and an additional \$240.0 million in 2010 for toxic sediment cleanup projects funded by the E.P.A.'s Great Lakes Legacy Act program. We also hope you will provide at least \$10 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program and at least \$130 million for ready-to-go habitat restoration projects. We expect that thousands of direct and indirect jobs and additional economic opportunities will be created by investing in these priorities.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition is a group of over 100 national, regional, and local organizations working to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The Coalition represents millions of Americans that live near, work near and love this national treasure.

Since 2002, cleanups funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act have removed nearly a million cubic yards of toxic sediments from rivers and harbors in the Great Lakes. These cleanups are creating thousands of jobs and excitement for additional economic development in Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Buffalo, Gary, Duluth, and other Midwest urban areas. The city of Trenton, Michigan can now consider development plans for new homes, restaurants, river walks, and marinas along the Detroit River following a Legacy Act clean up in 2005. Clean ups not only impact the region's environment, but its economic well-being. The Brookings Institute released a study last fall that clearly linked how cleaning up contaminated sediments increases coastal property values in the Great Lakes \$12 to \$19 billion.

Though progress in cleaning up toxic sediments in the Great Lakes is being made, much work remains to be done. The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) estimated that total clean up costs for Areas of Concern (AOCs) could range from \$1.5 billion to \$4.5 billion. As you may know, AOCs are the sites where the Great Lakes Legacy Act targets its sediment clean up funds. By increasing the funding available under the Legacy Act program, the stimulus package could put thousands to work cleaning up known contaminated sediment sites in AOCs helping to revitalize the region's economy while protecting the public's health.

Our request is consistent with requests by the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes states for projects that can be started and completed in the next two years. A list of those projects is attached. As you can see, many projects could be undertaken in struggling urban areas throughout the region.

We also now urge you to provide \$10 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program, with a set aside for green infrastructure, instead of the \$6.5 billion our Coalition recommended in a letter we sent you on November 10. A copy of that letter is attached for your reference. Great Lakes cities need help replacing and repairing combined sewer systems in the Great Lakes region and across the country. Our

earlier request was based on reports that the size of the recovery package being considered last month was going to be more modest and before we saw the number of ready-to-go projects identified by our nation's mayors. Given the extreme need for a bold recovery plan, the need to put people to work in this recession, and the large need for this type of investment, we hope Congress will invest more next year.

Lastly, we also support investing \$132 million in programs like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act and other habitat programs to fund wetlands and habitat projects that are ready-to-go. Restoring habitat and wetlands not only reduces the overall cost of water infrastructure projects; they also contribute to our Great Lakes states' significant hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching economies.

As you may know, the Great Lakes comprise 95 percent of the nation's fresh surface water that powers industry, provides habitat, and creates a way of life. Our nation's economic health is connected to the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The Great Lakes cannot heal without the help of the Great Lakes Legacy Act and the resources it provides.

For more information about our coalition or our requests, please contact Chad Lord, the coalition's policy director, at 202-454-3385 or clord@npca.org.

Sincerely,

Jeff Skelding
Campaign Director

Chad Lord
Policy Director

Attachment (2)

Cc: The Honorable Barbara Boxer
The Honorable James Oberstar