

Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

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Coalition Urges Obama, Congress to Create Jobs, Heal the Great Lakes in Recovery Package

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (December 11, 2008)—As Congress works to craft an economic recovery package for President-elect Barack Obama to sign within the first days of taking office, the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition is asking Congress and President-elect Obama to fund projects that both create jobs and restore the Great Lakes.

“There is an urgent need to both jump-start the economy and heal the Great Lakes,” said Jeff Skelding, national campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. “We can accomplish both. We can put thousands of people to work, boost the regional economy and restore the Great Lakes if Congress seizes the opportunity now and funds these important priorities before the problems get worse and more costly.”

In a letter sent to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), the coalition urged Congressional leaders to include in next year’s economic recovery package \$10.63 billion to modernize waste-water infrastructure, clean-up toxic sediments, and restore wetlands and habitat in the region—an investment that would create at least 170,000 jobs. Read the letter at:

http://www.healthylakes.org/site_upload/upload/2008-12-10_StimulusLtr_FINAL.pdf

The coalition urged Congress to invest \$10 billion to upgrade municipal wastewater infrastructure nationally through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. By formula, about \$3.7 billion would go to the Great Lakes states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin—creating roughly 170,000 jobs in the region. See chart below.

State	Funding under Clean Water SRF formula	Jobs created
Illinois	\$451 million	21,197
Indiana	\$240 million	11,280
Michigan	\$429 million	20,163
Minnesota	\$183 million	8,601
New York	\$1.1 billion	51,700
Ohio	\$562 million	26,414
Pennsylvania	\$395 million	18,565
Wisconsin	\$270 million	12,690

Job estimate comes from National Association of Clean Water Agencies.

The coalition also urged Congress to include \$500 million over two years as part of the Great Lakes Legacy Act to remove toxic sediments from Great Lakes harbors and tributaries to protect the health of people and wildlife. The coalition’s recommendation stems from a ready-to-go project list submitted by the Great Lakes Commission. Project financing per state is below.

State	Great Lakes Legacy Act Funding-Year 1 Stimulus	Great Lakes Legacy Act Funding-Year 2 Stimulus	Total Stimulus Package Funding
Illinois	\$36 million		\$36 million
Indiana	\$20 million		\$20 million
Michigan	\$43 million	\$65 million	\$109 million
Minnesota	\$7.5 million	\$158 million	\$155.5 million
New York	\$23 million		\$23 million
Ohio	\$74.65	\$15.75 million	\$90.4 million
Wisconsin	\$57 million		\$57 million
Total	\$261.15 million	\$238.75	\$499.9 million

For the full list of projects by state, visit:

http://www.healthylakes.org/site_upload/upload/LegacyActProjects_2009-2010.pdf

Lastly, the coalition recommended including \$130 million for ready-to-go habitat and wetland restoration projects.

“Confronting these serious threats will help heal the lakes and contribute to a healthy regional economy,” said Skelding. “An investment in the Great Lakes will pay big dividends in the form of creating jobs, protecting public health, and restoring a resource that millions of people depend on for their drinking water and way of life. Action on this scale would be a huge step forward in the effort to restore the Great Lakes.”

The push for Great Lakes restoration funding in the federal economic recovery package comes as national conservation groups lobby for water, energy and infrastructure projects that both create jobs and restore and protect the environment.

Last year, the Brookings Institution found that investing \$26 billion to restore the Great Lakes would lead to between \$80 billion and \$100 billion in economic return for the region, including immediate short-term benefits of between \$30 billion and \$50 billion.

More than 23 billion gallons of sewage enter the Great Lakes annually, closing beaches and threatening the health of people and wildlife. Toxic contamination in and around the Great Lakes is responsible for drinking water restrictions, beach closings and fish consumption advisories.

“We can meet the challenge of jumpstarting our economy and improving the health of the Great Lakes,” said Skelding. “We look forward to working with Congress and the Obama Administration in putting forward solutions to restore the lakes, rejuvenate our economy and provide a better quality of life for millions of people in the Midwest and across America.”

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 100 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

For more information, visit: <http://www.healthylakes.org/>