



February 8, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the member and partner organizations of the Healing Our Waters®-Great Lakes Coalition, ask that as you make final funding decisions for fiscal year 2011 you provide \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Although we are seeing results from restoration efforts, there is still so much work to do to address the problems facing the Great Lakes—which provides drinking water to more than 35 million people. The longer we wait, the harder and more expensive solving these problems becomes.

Great Lakes restoration efforts funded by the federal government are improving the lives of millions of Americans in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. These efforts are cleaning up drinking water flowing to millions of homes and thousands of industries, are updating municipal sewage facilities to protect drinking water for people for decades to come, and are improving infrastructure important for future economic growth. Efforts are also helping prevent polluted run-off and cleaning up pollution to keep beaches open, creating good-paying jobs in engineering and manufacturing to clean up toxic hot spots and install new sewage treatment facilities; and employing specialists restoring wetlands and Midwesterners working in the fishing and tourism industries.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is a solid economic and environmental investment.

Restoring the Lakes produces \$2 for every \$1 we invest. Restoration projects create good-paying jobs now, from hydrologists to engineers, landscape architects to truck drivers and more, while laying the foundation for long-term prosperity. Restoration projects, in short, deliver results. After cleaning up toxic sediment in a Milwaukee, Wis. river, a small business was able to grow because the clean water drew more people to the riverfront. City leaders in Frankenmuth, Mich., cheered on the completion of a wetland restoration project at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge because they understood its importance to tourism in their region and state. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is benefitting people, communities and businesses. By cleaning up drinking water, putting people to work and improving the quality of life for millions of people, Great lakes restoration may be the best return on the federal dollar in the budget.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done – more opportunities towards healthy lakes and healthy lives – and to create thousands more jobs. Aging sewers dump billions of gallons of sewage into the Lakes, closing beaches and threatening our health. Invasive species such as zebra mussel and sea lamprey are harming the food web and commercial and sport fisheries—while new threats like the Asian carp continue to appear. Toxic pollutants remain in the mud along Great Lakes rivers and harbors of major cities throughout the region, posing risks to human health and wildlife and pushing down property values. There is a backlog of projects that are ready-to-go. We must continue efforts to modernize sewage treatment, clean up polluted harbors, restore wetlands and prevent unwanted, new species from entering the Lakes. Each of these steps is essential if we are to restore the Lakes, revive the economy, and restore the vital center of our country.

The bottom line is if we wait and allow restoration efforts to stall, these problems will only get worse and the price we pay will ultimately be higher. Cutting back on our commitment will cost the region the

opportunity to create hundreds of thousands of jobs in Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and Pennsylvania; will worsen existing threats while not preparing for new and emerging ones; will continue to put public health at risk and erode the quality of life of millions of people; and will deter workers and businesses from moving and staying in the region.

Again, we ask that you make the economic and environmental restoration of the Great Lakes a top priority and demonstrate that support through funding the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at the President's requested \$300 million level for the current fiscal year.

Sincerely,

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