



Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition

May 20, 2011

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
SD-131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
SH-125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

We, the members of the Healing Our Waters[®]-Great Lakes Coalition, ask that you provide \$475 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in Fiscal Year 2012. The GLRI – and you – have provided the Great Lakes region with much needed support, and we are seeing on-the-ground results. However, while pressures on Congress to balance the U.S. budget will not diminish, neither will the problems facing the Great Lakes. If we wait and allow restoration efforts to slow, these serious problems will only get worse and the price we pay will be much higher.

Great Lakes restoration efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and work is beginning on over 300 restoration projects throughout the region that will measurably restore the Great Lakes and address the most urgent problems facing them. These projects are cleaning up drinking water flowing to millions of homes and thousands of industries and improving infrastructure important for future economic growth in the eight-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. These projects are delivering results throughout, including:

- In Ashtabula, Ohio, a \$60 million cleanup of the Ashtabula River resulted in the removal of 630,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment that contained more than 25,000 pounds of hazardous PCBs and other toxic compounds. The cleanup improved water quality and deepened the river channel for maritime commerce, fishing, and recreational boating.
- In Milwaukee, Wis., state and federal agencies completed a \$22 million clean-up project that resulted in the removal of 167,000 cubic yards of toxic mud from the Kinnickinnic River, which flows into Lake Michigan. The cleanup restored navigation to the river that had been long avoided and attracted new businesses, including a new office complex and additional docks to marinas.
- In Saginaw Bay, Mich., a \$3.1 million wetlands restoration project restored more than 900 acres of wetlands in Tobico Marsh and permanently protected roughly 25,000 acres of wetlands. It is estimated that recreational activities, such as hunting, fishing, and birding, will generate \$239 million over a 30-year period.

Investments in Great Lakes restoration also create short-term jobs and lead to long-term economic benefits for the Great Lakes states. A Brookings Institution report shows that every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration generates \$2 in return making Great Lakes restoration one of the best investments with the federal dollar in the budget. Many jobs have been created by efforts to clean up the Great Lakes and

restore fish and wildlife habitat. These jobs include wetland scientists, electricians, engineers, landscape architects, plumbers, truck drivers and many others.

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. Cutting funding means slowing our restoration efforts down, letting problems get worse and more expensive to solve. Ultimately, cutting spending on the Great Lakes won't save money—it will cost the nation more. As the source of drinking water for 30 million people, the nation cannot afford not to protect and restore the Great Lakes.

We appreciate the support for Great Lakes restoration in recent years and urge continued support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which is critically important to the sustainability and economic vitality of the Great Lakes and the surrounding eight-state region. If you have any questions, please contact Chad Lord, policy director of the Healing Our Waters®-Great Lakes Coalition at (202) 454-3385 or clord@npca.org.

Sincerely,

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