

**American Rivers - Great Lakes United - Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition -
Izaak Walton League of America**

For Immediate Release:

July 20, 2011

Contact:

Jordan Lubetkin, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, 734-887-7109

Jeff Skelding, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, 410-245-8021

Jennifer Nalbone, Great Lakes United, 716-213-0408

Katie Rousseau, American Rivers, 419-936-3759

Dave Zentner, Izaak Walton League of America, 218-724-3926

Coalition Opposes Funding Bill that Guts Great Lakes Programs

Bill slashes funding; undermines restoration and clean water protections;
threatens EPA funding to states for taking action on invasive species

Interior spending bill could come to full House vote as early as this weekend

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (July 20, 2011) – The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition today announced its strong opposition to a House spending bill that guts programs to restore the Great Lakes and prevent sewage contamination. The bill also contains a laundry list of harmful policy riders that undermine the nation’s efforts to restore the Great Lakes and all our nation’s great waters, protect water quality, and prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species.

“This bill is bad for the Great Lakes and the millions of people who depend on them for their drinking water, jobs, and way of life,” **said Jeff Skelding, director of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition.** “This bill will not save the nation one penny. Problems like sewage contamination and invasive species are getting worse. Cutting restoration now will make the problems harder and more costly to solve. We urge the Great Lakes Congressional delegation and the U.S. House to reject this bill, go back to the drawing board, and pass a bill that supports successful restoration programs.”

The Fiscal Year 2012 Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill decimates programs that millions of people depend on to ensure clean water for drinking, public health, recreation, and quality of life. For example, the bill:

- Slashes funding to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to clean up toxic pollution, restore habitat, and control and prevent invasive species;
- Guts funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund, which helps communities modernize wastewater infrastructure to prevent sewage overflows which contribute to beach closures;
- Threatens funding to states that have acted to protect the Great Lakes from invasive species introduced by ballast water discharge; and;
- Rolls back clean water protections by prohibiting the EPA from doing its job to uphold the Clean Water Act.

The coalition is urging the U.S. House of Representatives to oppose the bill, which could come up for a vote as early as this weekend. The House Appropriations Committee passed the bill last week.

Details of the interior bill include:

The spending bill funds the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$250 million for fiscal year 2012, a reduction of 50 million (17 percent) from fiscal year 2011 and \$225 million reduction (48 percent) from fiscal year 2010. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds programs to clean up toxic sediments, restore habitat and prevent and control invasive species, including the Asian carp.

“The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is making restoration progress where for years there was none,” said Skelding. “It’s helping to clean up toxic sediments that affect the health and welfare of urban communities throughout the region. It’s restoring hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat by removing dams and protecting wetlands, which are critical to the region’s outdoor economy. Cutting funding only delays progress, which ultimately adds to the cost of cleaning up a source of drinking water for 30 million people.”

Learn more about successful restoration projects at: <http://healthylakes.org/successes/>

The Interior-EPA funding bill funds the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund at \$689 million for fiscal year 2012. That’s a cut of \$836 million (55 percent) from the fiscal year 2011 budget and more than \$1.4 billion (67 percent) from the fiscal year 2010 budget. (See chart below.) Great Lakes states stand to lose approximately \$300 million in federal funding to prevent sewage waste from entering the region’s river, streams and Great Lakes.

“These cuts will undermine efforts to restore the Great Lakes and protect the health of people in communities across the region,” said **Katie Rousseau, associate director of**

clean water programs for American Rivers. “Billions of gallons of sewage contaminate the Lakes every year. Now is not the time to undermine solutions that protect people from the risks of sewage overflows.”

State	Fiscal year 2011 funding	U.S. House FY 2012 funding	Funding Cut
Illinois	\$68,777,500.00	\$31,073,900.00	\$37,703,600.00
Indiana	\$36,600,000.00	\$16,536,000.00	\$20,064,000.00
Michigan	\$65,422,500.00	\$29,558,100.00	\$35,864,400.00
Minnesota	\$27,907,500.00	\$12,608,700.00	\$15,298,800.00
New York	\$167,902,500.00	\$75,858,900.00	\$92,043,600.00
Ohio	\$85,705,000.00	\$38,721,800.00	\$46,983,200.00
Pennsylvania	\$60,237,500.00	\$27,215,500.00	\$33,022,000.00
Wisconsin	\$41,175,000.00	\$18,603,000.00	\$22,572,000.00
Total	\$553,727,500.00	\$250,175,900.00	\$303,551,600.00

The bill contains a number of bad amendments, or riders, that undermine restoration efforts.

The bill includes a provision that threatens EPA funding from states that have implemented a ballast water regulation with a more protective standard or stringent timeline than proposed national or international standards. Under the provision, states like New York, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin could lose hundreds of millions of dollars in restoration funding by being barred from receiving funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund, Superfund, and other EPA programs.

“This bill goes against restoration efforts on many levels,” said **Jennifer Nalbene, director of navigation and invasive species for Great Lakes United.** “Threatening to keep funding from states that are doing the right thing on invasive species undermines the effort to restore the Great Lakes. Invasive species cost the region at least \$200 million annually – and that cost will grow unless strong protections are put in place to stop the next invasion. We need both strong invasive species protection and robust restoration funding to restore the Lakes and the communities which rely on them.”

The bill also contains riders that roll back clean water protections and prohibit federal agencies from doing their job to enforce the Clean Water Act.

“This bill is an assault on clean water programs that are a foundation of restoration efforts here and across the country,” said **Dave Zentner, past national president of the Izaak Walton League of America.** “Anyone who cares about clean water, safe beaches, family recreational opportunities and abundant wildlife needs to vigorously oppose this bill. We can do better—and need to do better to protect our environment and economy.”

Said **Jeff Skelding of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**: “These are a few of the many riders and funding cuts in this bill that could slow restoration efforts, not just in the Great Lakes but across the country in all our nation’s great waters. Great Lakes restoration programs are producing results across the region—but there is more work to do. It’s time for Congress to step up to the plate and support restoration efforts that protect our drinking water, public health, jobs and way of life.”

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 120 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>

###