

March XX, 2019

Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
2007 Rayburn Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable David P. Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

We write to respectfully request that you provide at least \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in the Fiscal Year 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

The Great Lakes are truly a national treasure. They are the largest surface freshwater system in the world, holding nearly 21 percent of the world's fresh water supply and 90 percent of the United States' fresh water supply. The Lakes are an economic driver that supports jobs, commerce, agriculture, transportation, and tourism for millions of people across the country. A new report last fall showed that for every GLRI dollar spent through 2016 in cleaning up toxic hot spots in Areas of Concern (AOC), controlling invasive species, restoring wildlife habitat, protecting wetlands, and reducing harmful algae will produce more than \$3 in additional economic activity through 2036.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to measurable economic results, the GLRI is producing significant environmental results for our region. Three AOCs have been delisted under the GLRI and all cleanup actions for eight more are complete. The number of beneficial use impairments, which are benchmarks for environmental harm in AOCs, that were removed increased more than six times under the GLRI. Nearly 5,000 river miles have been cleared of dams and other barriers reconnecting fish to important habitat.

Even with the results from over 4,700 projects, there is still much work to do. Nineteen AOCs are still contaminated with toxic sediment, stunting the development and threatening the health of too many Great Lakes communities. Runoff from sources including farm fields, septic systems, and other sources continue to pollute our waters causing increasingly larger toxic algae outbreaks each year that threatens water systems, public health, and economic vitality. Habitat loss and aquatic invasive species continue to damage our region's outdoor way of life.

The federal government must continue to partner with our region to address the challenges the Great Lakes face. GLRI resources have supplemented agency budgets and funded coordinated efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes ecosystem. We must ensure this work continues.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Michigan. 2018. "Socioeconomic Impacts of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative." Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics.

Halting or reducing this commitment would reverse years of progress, dramatically reducing the GLRI's impact, and jeopardize the environmental and economic health of the region for generations to come.

To that end, we urge you to continue this vital investment in the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes by including at least \$300 million for the GLRI in the Fiscal Year 2020 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

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DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress

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MIKE KELLY  
Member of Congress

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DANIEL T. KILDEE  
Member of Congress

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MIKE GALLAGHER  
Member of Congress

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ANTHONY GONZALEZ  
Member of Congress

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BOB GIBBS  
Member of Congress

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BILL HUIZENGA  
Member of Congress

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THOMAS R. SUOZZI  
Member of Congress

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ROBIN L. KELLY  
Member of Congress

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GWEN MOORE  
Member of Congress

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SEAN CASTEN  
Member of Congress

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JOHN KATKO  
Member of Congress

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BILL FOSTER  
Member of Congress

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JACKIE WALORSKI  
Member of Congress

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ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
Member of Congress

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BRIAN HIGGINS  
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