



April 15, 2019

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur  
Chairwoman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies  
2362B Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write to ask that you assure the Fiscal Year 2020 Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill provides funding for Great Lakes restoration priorities. We are grateful for the much-needed support the region has received. We are seeing on-the-ground results because of the investments in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. However, the Great Lakes still face many urgent problems, which is why we are concerned with the President's proposed budget. The problems we face will only get worse and the price we pay will be much higher if the federal partnership with the region is scaled back.

First, we ask the subcommittee to support the efforts of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The Army Corp of Engineers and the Department of the Interior are critical partners with the GLRI, seeing their regional efforts enhanced and supplemented by their participation. The initiative is improving the lives of millions of people and has seen efforts undertaken or completed on 4,706 restoration projects throughout the region. Projects that are benefiting communities by cleaning up waters that are the drinking source for millions of homes and thousands of industries. Results, include:

- Three Areas of Concern – Presque Isle, Pa.; Deer Lake, Mich.; and White Lake, Mich. – have been delisted since the GLRI began. The management actions necessary to delist 11 additional AOCs have also been completed. In the previous two decades before the GLRI, only one AOC had been cleaned up.
- 73 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) were addressed in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin under the GLRI, more than six times the total number of BUIs removed in the preceding 22 years. More BUIs have been removed under the GLRI than between 1987 and 2009.
- Combined with other funding, farmers implemented conservation action on more than 750,000 acres of rural lands through 2017 to reduce erosion and farm runoff that feeds toxic algal outbreaks. GLRI's supplemental funding helped double farmland under conservation around

Western Lake Erie; Saginaw Bay, Mich.; and Green Bay, Wis.; reducing projected phosphorus runoff by nearly 770,000 pounds.

- Over 5,000 river miles have been cleared of dams and barriers resulting in fish swimming into stretches of river where they have been absent for decades.

Second, the continued success of the GLRI and restoration efforts throughout the region rely on Congress' continued support for the other programs that protect our waters and those who rely on them. The Army Corps of Engineers is one of those critical leaders in the region providing essential research, technical expertise, and construction capability to undertake major restoration efforts.

For example, the challenge of soil erosion and runoff from farms, forests, and urban areas is a continuing threat. With impacts on water quality, the increasing risk and prevalence of harmful algal blooms, and the decrease in depths of navigation channels, the Corp of Engineers is critical to the economic and sustainable future of the region. Programs like the Great Lakes Tributary Model develop and provide free access to an array of computer models and web-based tools that help state and local agencies and non-governmental groups evaluate the impacts of soil conservation and non-point source pollution control. This is in addition to providing free training programs and web-based tools that can be used to evaluate soil erosion and sediment delivery anywhere in the Great Lakes watershed. These services are important to Great Lakes restoration efforts and we urge Congress to continue supporting this program at \$600,000 in the new fiscal year.

Other critical restoration and research programs include the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study (GLCRS) and the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program. The GLCRS is a regional initiative in collaboration with the Corps of Engineers, NOAA, USGS, FEMA and EPA that investigates opportunities to improve resilience within both the built and natural coastal environments and aims to identify vulnerable areas and recommend measures to increase resilience. The Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program engages in the planning, design, and construction of projects that restore ecosystems across the Great Lakes watershed. Projects executed under this program (in collaboration with cost-sharing non-federal partners) include the restoration of wetlands and aquatic habitat on public lands, dam removal to re-establish free flowing rivers, improving fish passages, spawning and nursery habitat, and restoration of coastal habitat. We urge Congress to fund these previously unfunded initiatives at \$500,000 and \$8 million respectively.

Third, the threat of aquatic invasive species, like Asian carp, is real and persistent in our region. To keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes we ask Congress to fully fund all actions taken as part of the FY2018 Asian Carp Action Plan, adjusted to reflect the Asian carp threat and agency need. The Corps of Engineers is at the forefront of these efforts engaging federal and local partners on critical construction projects in defense of the spread of these invasive species. We ask the subcommittee to include language that requires the Army Corps of Engineers to move to pre-construction engineering and design for new structural measures at the Brandon Road lock and dam and provide the necessary \$3.8 million in funding. The establishment of Asian carp in the Great Lakes would devastate a \$7 billion fisheries industry and would undermine the outdoor recreation economy. This site is a logical choke point to block the spread of this invasive species, and it is critical that the Army Corp has the mandate to move forward with the Brandon Road Lock and Dam Tentatively Selected Plan without delay.

We also urge Congress to continue funding for existing defensive lines. The Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal Barrier is a system of electric barriers that protects the only known continuous connection between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins from the risk of transfer of invasive species. Operated to deter the inter-basin establishment of Asian carp and other invasive fish, the barriers are one control technology in a broad interagency Asian carp prevention effort. Ensuring their efficacy and

continued operation is critical and we urge Congress to provide at least \$13.94 million for the Corp of Engineers continued efforts.

Fourth, our region will fall short of our restoration goals if the federal agencies that are vital partners in our restoration efforts have their budgets cut. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior provide critical administrative and programmatic support that helps us ensure the success of both the GLRI and other restoration activities in the region. These departments and agencies are critical partners with Great Lakes states, cities, industries, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations. Cutting these programs administered by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior as proposed by the administration is unacceptable.

Investments in Great Lakes restoration create short-term jobs and lead to long-term economic benefits for the Great Lakes states and the country. A report last fall from economists at the University of Michigan, Central Michigan University, and Duke University demonstrated that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's (GLRI) ecological investments are resulting in significant economic benefits. The study showed that for every \$1 the GLRI invested through 2016 to clean up toxic hot spots in Areas of Concern (AOC), control invasive species, restore wildlife habitat, protect wetlands, and reduce harmful algae the investment will produce more than \$3 in additional economic activity regionwide through 2036 (more in some cities—see chart). This new research demonstrated that the GLRI is creating new real estate and commercial development—particularly in waterfront areas. This development has resulted in a resurgence in water-based, outdoor recreation and increasing tourism across the region, increasing housing options and home values, and an increasing number of young people staying in or relocating to Great Lakes communities.

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 will slow restoration efforts, allowing problems to get worse and making them 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 to stop protecting and restoring the Great Lakes.

Now is not the time to scale back our nation's commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy. Progress is being made and we are seeing results. For the economy and the environment, please make sure that the fiscal year 2020 appropriations bills provide at least \$300 million for the GLRI; US Army Corps of Engineers projects are backed; and the Asian carp action plan is fully funded.

If you have questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact our coalition's policy director, Chad Lord, at 202-454-3385 or [clord@npca.org](mailto:clord@npca.org).

Sincerely,

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