



## Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus

March 6, 2019

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Chairwoman, Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2365 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1026 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House Appropriations Committee  
2256 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House Appropriations Committee  
1124 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwomen Lowey and McCollum and Ranking Members Granger and Joyce,

Clean water is essential to support a healthy population, a thriving economy, and a well-functioning ecosystem. As the major source of water for communities located within the Great Lakes basin, the Great Lakes system is a vital resource in which the region's residents all share a common interest. As leaders of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus (GLLC), we are writing to express our strong support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and for full federal funding to continue the invaluable work of this important program. The GLLC is a nonpartisan, binational organization of state and provincial legislators organized around the guiding principle of assuring that the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River continue to provide a plentiful source of clean, affordable water to the region's residents, businesses, and industries.

As the Great Lakes Interagency Task Force documented recently in the "FY2017 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Report to Congress and the President," since the GLRI was established in 2010, federal investment has resulted in tangible progress in restoring and protecting the lakes. During FY 2017, all the required management actions were completed to delist three Areas of Concern: River Raisin in Michigan, St. Marys River in Michigan, and Lower Menominee in both Michigan and Wisconsin. Actions to control invasive species took place on over 18,500 acres in FY 2017, with over 134,000 acres addressed since the start of the GLRI. Over the life of the initiative, more than 225,000 acres of habitat have been protected, restored, or enhanced, including over 40,000 acres in FY 2017. In addition, as a result of GLRI funding in FY 2017, over 364,000 pounds of phosphorus will be prevented from running off of agricultural lands into the Great Lakes. The lakes also will be protected from over 120 million gallons of polluted storm water in urban areas thanks to GLRI funding for urban runoff projects, including green infrastructure projects in 13 coastal cities in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin.



**MIDWEST**

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These significant achievements will have a lasting impact on the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem. This environmental progress, in turn, brings economic benefits to the region. In 2018, a study conducted by the Great Lakes Commission concluded that, from 2010 to 2016, every dollar of federal spending on GLRI projects ultimately will produce \$3.35 in additional economic output in the Great Lakes states through 2036. In older industrial cities such as Detroit and Buffalo, the return on each dollar invested could reach \$4 or more. Almost half of this additional economic activity will be driven by increased tourism to coastal communities as existing businesses thrive and new ones are created to serve residents and tourists visiting waterfront areas revitalized with support from the GLRI. Our Great Lakes are both a natural wonder and an economic engine, therefore it is not surprising that the GLRI – an environmental restoration program – has secondary benefits as an economic development program.

We urge you to continue to support federal investment in restoring and protecting the Great Lakes through the GLRI. In 2016, the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress authorized the initiative at \$300 million annually for five years. We sincerely hope that the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress will follow through on this commitment and fully fund the GLRI in Fiscal Year 2020. By copy of this letter to the Congressional delegations from the Great Lakes states, we encourage their action in support of the GLRI.

We appreciate your leadership and your attention to this matter. We would welcome the opportunity to brief you on the importance of the Great Lakes to our citizens, businesses, and industries and to discuss our position in support of the GLRI. If you have any questions about this letter or wish to arrange a briefing, please contact Lisa Janairo, GLLC Director, at [ljanairo@csg.org](mailto:ljanairo@csg.org) or 920.458.5910.

Sincerely,



Senator Ed Charbonneau, Indiana  
Chair, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative  
Caucus



Senator Laura Fine, Illinois



Senator Curt VanderWall, Michigan



Assemblyman Peter Lawrence, New York



Representative Curtis Sonney, Pennsylvania



Senator Ann Rest, Minnesota  
GLLC Past Chair



Representative Robyn Gabel, Illinois  
Vice Chair, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence  
Legislative Caucus



Senator Rick Niemeyer, Indiana



Representative Jennifer Schultz, Minnesota



Representative Michael Sheehy, Ohio



Representative Beth Meyers, Wisconsin

cc: Congressional delegations from the Great Lakes states