



November XX, 2022

Dear Representative/Senator,

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition and XX of our member organizations, we write to urge Congress quickly come to an agreement on a final fiscal year 2023 appropriations package that enhances the federal governments support for Great Lakes restoration and clean water priorities.

The Great Lakes define our region's way of life, serving as the drinking water source for more than 42 million people and providing a rich aquatic habitat supporting a \$7 billion annual fishing industry and Great Lakes recreation draws millions of tourists who boost the economies of shoreline communities. In short, the Great Lakes are where many millions of people live, work and play.

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 as legacy pollutants persist, well-known contaminants like lead and PFAS continue to make drinking water unsafe, emerging contaminants are being uncovered, climate change is overwhelming aging infrastructure, and years of underinvestment continue to threaten our most vulnerable communities who lack access to clean and affordable water. These challenges we face will only get worse, and the price we pay will only rise unless Congress ends the continuing funding uncertainty and strengthens its commitment to clean water in the region and across the nation.

First, we ask Congress support the House proposal of **\$368 million** for the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)*, though we encourage Congress continue to explore opportunities to fully fund the program at \$400 million as called for in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2019. Restoration efforts are improving the lives of millions of people and work is underway or completed on more than 6,000 restoration projects throughout the region. These projects are benefiting the health of our communities and creating jobs. For every GLRI dollar spent in cleaning up toxic hot spots in Areas of Concern (AOC), controlling invasive species, restoring wildlife habitat, protecting wetlands, and reducing harmful algae our communities see economic benefits of more than 3 to1.

Second, the successes of Great Lakes restoration efforts are based upon an array of critical federal programs and infrastructure investments, without which our region will fall short of our restoration goals. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the National Park Service, and other bureaus within the Department of the Interior work hand in hand with Great Lakes states, cities, industries, Tribes, and non-governmental organizations. In providing critical administrative and programmatic support they help us ensure the success of both the GLRI and other restoration activities. We urge any FY2023 appropriations package fully fund these key agencies and fund key Great Lakes programs at no less than:

- ✓ *Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration (GLFWRA): \$8 million*
- ✓ *USGS Great Lakes Science Center: \$15 million*
- ✓ *Army Corps Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration (GLFER): \$15 million*
- ✓ *Army Corps Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study: \$3 million*
- ✓ *Defense against invasive carp through the U.S. FWS and USGS Invasive Carp programs, and funding phase 1 construction of the Brandon Road Lock & Dam: \$27 million, \$11 million, and \$47.9 million, respectively.*

Third, our region like much of the nation is facing a water infrastructure crisis. We commend Congress' historic investment through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law last year, investing over \$50 billion in water infrastructure programs over 5-years. But the law's impact is reliant on Congress appropriating these critical funds on an annual basis, we urge any FY2023 appropriations package include no less than:

- ✓ *Clean Water State Revolving Fund: \$4.38 billion*
- ✓ *Drinking Water State Revolving Fund: \$3.87 billion*
- ✓ *Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grants: \$280 million*
- ✓ *EPA lead programs including Reducing Lead in Drinking Water and Lead Mapping Pilot programs at \$182 million and \$10 million respectively.*
- ✓ *Small and Disadvantaged Communities Grants: \$80 million*
- ✓ *Individual Household Decentralized Wastewater Treatment System Grants: \$50 million*

Thankfully, due to federal investments, we have seen real progress towards restoring and protecting the Great Lakes but much work still needs to be done. Aging sewers, invasive species, and toxic pollutants threaten the region, endangering human and wildlife health, lowering property values, and hurting the region's economy. Moreover, emerging contaminants and a changing climate continue to exacerbate the challenges we face, many of which disproportionately impact people that have historically borne the brunt of environmental injustice. With the weight of these impacts hamstringing community investment and exposing the unaffordability of water for so many families, it is critical that Congress end the funding uncertainty for FY2023 and provide robust funding for Great Lakes priorities in the year ahead.

If you have questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact our coalition's Senior Legislative Analyst, Alexis Lopez-Cepero, at alopez-cepero@npca.org.

Sincerely,