



April 21, 2025

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Collins
Chairman
Subcommittee on Water Resources and
Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frederica Wilson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water Resources and
Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Chairman Collins, & Ranking Member Wilson:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition and 111 of our member and partner organizations, we write to show our support for H.R. 284, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2025, and urge the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to take up consideration of this bipartisan legislation as soon as possible.

The Great Lakes define our region's way of life, provide drinking water for over 30 million Americans, and is at the heart of a binational economy that is the third largest in the world. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has allowed the region of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and its federally recognized Tribes to undertake one of the world's largest freshwater ecosystem restoration projects. Restoring our waters and protecting the health of those that rely on them. This legislation is essential to continue this work, restore our waters, and protect the health of those that rely on them across the region and nation.

H.R. 284 reauthorizes the successful Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and helps meet the on-the-ground needs of communities across the region by authorizing \$500 million annually over five years. Over the past decade, its non-regulatory approach has ensured effective inter-governmental coordination that has improved lives across Great Lakes communities after decades of environmental damage threatened public health, the regional economy, and drinking water. With work underway or completed on more than 8,100 restoration projects, the initiative has resulted in economic returns of more than 3 to 1 across the region and made tremendous progress. Because of the GLRI:

- 6 Areas of Concern (AOC), the most toxic and contaminated sites in the region – Presque Isle, PA; Deer Lake, MI; White Lake, MI; Lower Menominee River, MI & WI; Ashtabula River, OH; Rochester Embayment, NY – have been delisted. The management actions necessary to delist 9 additional AOCs have also been completed. In the previous two decades before the GLRI, only one AOC had been cleaned up.
- 118 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) have been addressed under the GLRI, over 10 times the total number of BUIs removed in the preceding 22 years, restoring fish and wildlife habitat and providing safe access to our shorelines and waters for recreation.
- 2.15 million farmland acres in priority watersheds have received technical and financial support to implement nutrient management actions. Conservation efforts have resulted in a projected reduction of 2.8 million pounds of phosphorus runoff, a major contributor to toxic algal blooms.
- 8,170 river miles have been cleared of dams and barriers resulting in fish swimming into stretches of river where they have been absent for decades and increasing biodiversity overall.
- Nearly 530,000 acres of habitat, including 72,000 acres of coastal wetlands, have been enhanced, protected, and restored by improving ecosystem and community resilience.

Even with these results, there is still much work to be done. Over half of impairments remain untreated across 15 AOCs, placing the health of communities at risk. Drinking water and coastal economies remain under threat from toxic algal blooms that have shut down entire water systems, as was seen in Toledo, Ohio in 2014. Invasive species, like Invasive Carp, are knocking at the door of the lakes and threaten a \$7 billion fishery. 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. This underscores the urgency for the GLRI to address these growing threats by working to ensure restoration investments lead to equitable outcomes for everyone in the region.

The GLRI has been an environmental and economic success, but much work remains. The region stands ready to continue this important federal partnership and ensure that all benefit from and enjoy these investments in restoration and protection.

Since 2004, the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition has been harnessing the collective power of more than 180 groups representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes. We are pleased to offer our support for this much-needed bill and urge the Committee to mark up the bill and favorably report the GLRI Act for consideration by the full House.

Please reach out to Alexis Lopez-Cepero, our coalition's Senior Policy Manager, with any questions. He can be reached at alopez-cepero@npca.org.

Sincerely,

Alliance for the Great Lakes
Americana Foundation

Beach Ambassador Program
Black Environmental Leaders Association

Bronx-River Sound Shore Audubon Society
Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Clean Wisconsin
Clinton River Watershed Council
Conservation Resource Alliance
Council of the Great Lakes Region
Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
Detroit Greenways Coalition
Detroit Zoological Society
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Elliott Donnelley Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Chicago)
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Erie County Federation of Sportsman's Clubs. (NYS)
FoodPLUS Detroit
For Love of Water (FLOW)
Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance
Freshwater Future
Friends Of Euclid Creek
Friends of the Chicago River
Friends of the Detroit River
Friends of the Rouge
Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts
Genesee Valley Audubon Society
Great Lakes Business Network
Great Lakes Observing System
Great Lakes Spirituality Project
Green Lake Association
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
Hoosier Environmental Council (HEC)

Huron Pines
Huron River Watershed Council
Illinois Division Izaak Walton League
Indiana Conservation Voters
Indiana Sportsmens Roundtable
Izaak Walton League of America
Izaak Walton League of America National Great Lakes Committee
Izaak Walton League of America Ohio Division
John G. Shedd Aquarium
Just Transition Northwest Indiana
Lake Erie Advocates
Lake Superior Watershed Conservancy Inc
League of Women Voters of Indiana
Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds
Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation
Michigan Climate Action Network
Michigan Environmental Council
Michigan League of Conservation Voters
Michigan Microplastics Coalition
Michigan United Conservation Clubs
Michigan Wildlife Conservancy
MidMichigan Environmental Action Council
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Milwaukee Water Commons
Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Moorish Science Temple of America
Nassau Hiking & Outdoor Club

National Audubon Society
National Audubon Society, Great Lakes
office
National Audubon Society, New York State
Office
National Museum of the Great Lakes
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
Need Our Water
New York State Council of Trout Unlimited
NYS Council of Trout Unlimited
Ohio Lead Free Kids Coalition
Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes
Restore America's Estuaries
River Alliance of Wisconsin
River Network
Riveredge Nature Center
Rockland Audubon Society
Sanctuary Farms
Save Lake Superior Association
Save Our Sky Blue Waters
Save Our Water
Save the Dunes
Save The River Upper St. Lawrence
Riverkeeper
Saw Mill River Audubon
Shorewood Waters Project
Sierra Club
South Shore Audubon Society
Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision
Surfrider Foundation
Talking Rivers
Temple Kol Ami

The Conservation Fund
The Freshwater Lab
The Junction Coalition
The Nature Conservancy
The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
The Wetlands Initiative
Three Waters Pipeline Resistance Team
Trout Unlimited Great Lakes Workgroup
Washtenaw County Conservation District
West Michigan Environmental Action
Council
Western New York Chapter Trout Unlimited
Western New York Environmental Alliance
Wisconsin Conservation Voters
Wisconsin Council of Trout Unlimited
Wisconsin Division - Izaak Walton League
of America
Wisconsin Wetlands Association
Wisdom Institute
Zero Waste Detroit