



Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs

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July 18, 2008

Dear Representative:

I am writing on behalf of the Great Lakes Commission to express our support for H.R. 6460, which reauthorizes the Great Lakes Legacy Act (P.L. 107-303). Passed into law in 2002, the Legacy Act authorizes funding to clean up contaminated sediments in Great Lakes Areas of Concern designated under the U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The Legacy Act program has been highly successful in cleaning up toxic hot spots in Great Lakes rivers and harbors and has become a cornerstone of Great Lakes restoration efforts. The program enjoys strong support from the Great Lakes states, the business community, regional environmental organizations and local Area of Concern advisory councils.

It is critical that Congress reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act and maintain this vital program for restoring the Great Lakes. Reauthorizing the Act is among the Great Lakes Commission's top legislative priorities for 2008. This also responds to recommendations from the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes.

If you are one of the co-sponsors of this legislation, we thank you for your leadership. If you have not done so already, we ask that you co-sponsor the legislation. In addition, we urge you to contact the House leadership and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to schedule time for consideration of the bill this year.

Earlier this year, I testified before the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and presented Congress with recommendations from the Great Lakes states for improving the Legacy Act's effectiveness and efficiency. The statement reflected the collective experience of the eight Great Lakes states, which have been the nonfederal sponsors for most Legacy Act projects implemented to date.

Congressmen James Oberstar and Vernon Ehlers have introduced H.R. 6460 to reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act. Similar legislation (S. 2994) has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Carl Levin and George Voinovich. The Great Lakes Commission supports these bills, which respond to many of its recommendations. The Commission is working with the sponsors of the bills to resolve outstanding issues. We believe these bipartisan bills can be refined and reconciled to satisfy the interests of stakeholders in the Great Lakes.

Your support for this legislation is needed now to ensure its passage during the current session of Congress. The Legacy Act has already removed nearly one million cubic yards of toxic sediments from the Great Lakes, and many additional cleanup projects are under review. We must continue this vital program.

Reauthorizing and strengthening the Legacy Act will demonstrate a firm Congressional commitment to sustaining progress in restoring the Great Lakes. Please work with your colleagues to make this a "win" for the Great Lakes in 2008. Should you have questions, please contact the Commission's executive director, Tim Eder, at 734-971-9135 or teder@glc.org.

Sincerely,

John D. Cherry, Jr.
Chair

*Ensuring environmental and economic
prosperity for the Great Lakes-St.
Lawrence region through
communications, policy research and
development, and advocacy.*