



Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs

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July 30, 2003

Dear :

As a Senator from a state bordering the largest freshwater system in the world, the Great Lakes, your leadership in ecosystem restoration is valued and appreciated. Therefore, on behalf of its eight member states, the Great Lakes Commission urges your support for at least a \$2.5 million appropriation for the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control. Five million dollars were authorized for this important program under the Farm Security & Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill.)

In years past, the Senate has provided valuable leadership to this federal/state partnership managed by the Great Lakes Commission to protect and improve Great Lakes water quality by reducing soil erosion and controlling sedimentation. **We are very concerned that the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee has not appropriated funds for FY 2004; the Senate appropriated \$2.5 million last year and has supported this highly successful program every year since its inception in 1991.**

Your colleagues in the House provide \$2.5 million in appropriations for the Basin Program for FY 2004. Although less than the full program authorization, this amount will provide continuation of important work and will ensure substantial progress in ecosystem restoration efforts. If this program is not funded, efforts to improve Great Lakes water quality will be severely compromised.

Every year, tens of millions of tons of topsoil erode into water bodies in the Great Lakes Basin, causing massive economic and environmental damages. This loss is estimated at \$315 million annually in terms of nutrient value alone. The Great Lakes Basin Program is addressing this problem with a unique, targeted grant approach emphasizing pollution prevention methodologies. Since its inception in 1991, the Great Lakes Basin Program has supported 259 demonstration and technical assistance projects throughout the Great Lakes region. Many of these projects have benefitted your constituents. The return on investment has been outstanding. To date, a total federal investment of \$8 million for grants to local organizations has or will leverage more than \$4.27 million in nonfederal dollars. (See attached background statement.) To learn more about the Great Lakes Basin Program visit the program's website at www.glc.org/basin.

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