

**Sen. Carl Levin: 4<sup>th</sup> Bi-National Lake St. Clair Conference**

*Transcript of remarks made via video statement  
at the March 19, 2008 Lake St. Clair Conference  
MacRay Harbor  
Harrison Township, MI*

Good morning everyone. I want to take just a moment to welcome you and thank you for your efforts on behalf of Lake St. Clair. My regional representative, Vicki Selva, tells me that right out side of the room in which you are meeting you can see the beautiful lake. It's a reminder of the upcoming Michigan summer and all the wonderful things the 'Heart of the Great Lakes' offers. And, it adds another reason I wish I were there with you in person.

For generations the waters of the Great Lakes have defined our region and helped our people thrive. We've depended on our waterways for navigation and agriculture, for drinking water and as a recreational hub for boating, swimming, fishing and more.

You come together today because of your commitment to making sure that the 5 million people who depend on Lake St. Clair and its watershed can be confident that it is clean and free of chemicals and bacteria. But you know and I know that the future of Lake St. Clair and the Great Lakes is not

assured unless we – the people who love it and need it – make sure to protect it.

Invasive species are one of the greatest threats – there are now 185 unwanted non-native species, costing a staggering \$5 billion a year in damage and control costs throughout the Great Lakes region.

Aquatic nuisance plants choke our shorelines and have crept into canals and drains and inland wetlands. Zebra mussels clog our water pipes and damage boats. Asian carp threaten to severely damage the food chain and throw fragile ecosystems out of balance.

Last year I introduced the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act. It would regulate how and where ships from foreign waters treat and release their ballast water. It would ensure a comprehensive approach towards addressing invasive species and act to prevent further species introductions.

We made progress last year on infrastructure improvements with the Water Resources Development Act, which we adopted despite a veto from

President Bush. Up to \$20 million may be spent on the environmental restoration of the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair.

Many of us joined the battle decades ago to restore, conserve and preserve our most valued treasure. We have made some gains, but much work lies ahead and new problems arise annually.

Our efforts must be focused, coordinated and funded. I've supported the Lake St. Clair Management Plan that's been developed by the Army Corp of Engineers. In fact, the Water Resources Development Act includes authorization for funding for the projects included in the Plan. The battle for the actual funding still lies ahead of us, as does the effort to get the Army Corp to quickly and efficiently put together the implementation partnership needed to move forward on the projects being identified by local stakeholders.

A condition for progress is that the priorities be developed locally, by those of you who know this Lake better than anyone. So we need you again to come together to clarify the needs and projects that will best restore and preserve Lake St. Clair.

And one other thing: I urge you to act in every way you can to make Great Lakes protection an issue in the Presidential Campaign, whichever candidate you support.

Thank you and I wish you the best as we move forward together in this great cause.