



Great Lakes
Commission



Healing Our Waters
Great Lakes
Coalition



Great Lakes
Fishery
Commission



Great Lakes and
St. Lawrence
Cities Initiative



Chippewa Ottawa
Resource
Authority



Council of
Great Lakes
Industries



Great Lakes
Metro Chambers
Coalition

CONTACT: Jordan Lubetkin, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, 734-904-1589
Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission, 734-474-1985

Groups Urge Officials to Restore Funding for Great Lakes, Sewage Infrastructure

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (September 5, 2013) – A coalition of Great Lakes states, municipalities, tribes, businesses, industries, and conservation groups is urging Congress to restore funding to programs to heal the Great Lakes. In a letter released today, the groups are asking lawmakers to reject massive cuts proposed in a U.S. House budget and to maintain the nation’s commitment to the Lakes, the source of drinking water for more than 30 million people.

Read the letter at: http://www.glc.org/announce/13/pdf/GLRI_SRF.pdf

The letter’s release comes days before hundreds of Great Lakes supporters from conservation organizations, businesses, industry, academia, and public officials gather in Milwaukee, Wis., September 9-12 as part of Great Lakes Week. Read more at <http://glweek.org/>

The groups are pushing to reinstate funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which supports efforts to clean up toxic contamination, reduce runoff from cities and farms, confront invasive species like Asian carp, and restore fish and wildlife habitat; and for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which provides low-interest loans to communities to fix sewers to prevent water pollution and keep beaches open. Both programs were cut roughly 80 percent in a House budget released in July. The restoration initiative was cut from \$285 million to \$60 million, while the clean water fund was slashed from \$1.37 billion to \$250 million. An amendment would boost Great Lakes restoration funding to \$210 million.

Signatories to the letter—which include the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, Council of Great Lakes Industries, Great Lakes Commission, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition, and the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition—are asking Congress to fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$300 million and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund at its current level of \$1.37 billion. A draft U.S. Senate funding bill proposes funding the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$300 million and increasing funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to \$1.45 billion.

“The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative helps to achieve priorities established by nearly 1,500 stakeholders who participated in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration. The region’s industries were part of that process and are strong supporters of programs that help to manage our economic, social, and natural resources sustainably,” said **Kathryn Buckner, president of the Council of Great Lakes Industries**. “The federal government has recognized the importance of the priorities established during the Collaboration and needs to continue supporting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and Clean Water State Revolving Fund to fulfill that vision.”

Signatories to the letter helped craft, and later supported the enactment of, the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes, a 2005 plan initiated by President

George W. Bush calling for a \$20 billion investment to restore the Lakes. Over the last four years, President Barack Obama and the U.S. Congress have invested more than \$1.37 billion through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to implement that plan. More than 1,500 projects have been funded. Those projects are producing results in communities across the region.

View an interactive map and searchable database of projects funded in the Initiative's first three years at <http://glc.org/restore/glrimap/>

“The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund program have been tremendously beneficial in helping states throughout the region clean up and restore our waters,” said **Kenneth G. Johnson, chair, Great Lakes Commission**. “These programs, coupled with states’ efforts, are helping us maximize the value of the Great Lakes as both a natural treasure and vital economic asset.”

Read about successful Great Lakes restoration projects at: <http://healthylakes.org/>

“The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is providing critically needed resources to combat the introduction and spread of harmful aquatic invasive species such as Asian carp and sea lamprey,” said **Bob Lambe, executive secretary, Great Lakes Fishery Commission**. “It’s imperative that we safeguard the Great Lakes fishery, which generates \$7 billion in economic activity annually for the United States.”

Much work remains, however. The letter warns: “Cutting funding now will only slow restoration efforts, allowing problems to get worse and more expensive to solve.”

“Beach closings, fish consumption advisories, algal blooms, and drinking water restrictions are all reminders that the Lakes still need our help,” said **Todd Ambts, campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**. “We look forward to working with the Great Lakes congressional delegation to restore funding to programs that create jobs, protect drinking water, safeguard public health, and uphold our quality of life.”

The Great Lakes are an economic driver for the eight-state region of Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Minnesota. More than 1.5 million U.S. jobs are directly connected to the Great Lakes, generating \$62 billion in wages annually, according to an analysis by Michigan Sea Grant at the University of Michigan. The Lakes are the foundation for a \$30 billion regional tourism industry. Restoration efforts create jobs while providing long-term economic benefits. According to the Brookings Institution, every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration produces at least \$2 in economic benefits. Some studies suggest the return on investment is closer to 6-to-1.

“As our defining natural asset, the quality of the Great Lakes is pivotal to the future of our region's economy,” said **Ed Wolking, Jr., executive vice president for the Detroit Regional Chamber**. “While we recognize that the federal budget must be reined in, and that there must be a greater balance between spending and revenues, we also urge Congress to consider continuing and completing the vital projects that make up the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.”

“All of our communities benefit from the actions made possible by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative,” said **Jane A. TenEyck, executive director, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority**. “We want to ensure that future generations are able to fish, hunt and enjoy the Great Lakes without worrying about pollution or invasive species.”

###

About the organizations:

Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority gathers all 1836 Treaty fishing tribes under its mantle: Bay Mills Indian Community, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. The CORA governing body is composed of each tribe's chairperson and each tribes' natural resource entity chairperson. Under the CORA charter two committees were established: Great Lakes Resource Committee to serve as inter-tribal management body for the 1836 Treaty fishery and the Inland Lands and Waters Resources Committee to oversee inland resource matters. The 1836 Treaty fishery continues to be one of the most regulated fisheries on the Great Lakes, subject to regulations under CORA, the tribes, FDA HACCP seafood safety and US Coast Guard maritime safety

Council of Great Lakes Industries is a non-profit organization representing the common interests of U.S. and Canadian industrial organizations from the manufacturing, utilities, transportation, communications, financial services and trade sectors that have investments in the Great Lakes Basin. The Council works to ensure that industry is a substantive partner in the Great Lakes region's public policy development process. The Council is a partner organization with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Geneva, Switzerland.

The **Great Lakes Commission**, chaired by Kenneth G. Johnson, water division administrator at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, is an interstate compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. The Commission consists of governors' appointees, state legislators, and agency officials from its eight member states. Associate membership for Ontario and Québec was established through the signing of a "Declaration of Partnership." The Commission maintains a formal Observer program involving U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, tribal authorities, binational agencies and other regional interests. The Commission offices are located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Learn more at www.glc.org.

The **Great Lakes Fishery Commission** is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission has the responsibility to support fisheries research, control the invasive sea lamprey in the Great Lakes, and facilitate implementation of A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries, a provincial, state, and tribal fisheries management agreement.

The **Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative** (www.gslcities.org) is a binational coalition over 100 mayors and other local officials that works actively with federal, state, tribal, first nation and provincial governments and other stakeholders to advance the protection, restoration and promotion of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin.

The **Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition** includes more than 30 chambers of commerce representing more than 150,000 businesses. Working together, the Coalition is dedicated to forging a strategic partnership between the Great Lakes region and the federal government. The Coalition seeks to leverage our area's historic strengths in manufacturing, research and innovation to maximize job creation that will benefit the entire country.

The **Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition** consists of 125 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes. Learn more at www.healthylakes.org or follow us on Twitter @healthylakes.