

# Priorities for Sustaining Great Lakes Restoration and Economic Revitalization

A Joint Agenda for the Great Lakes Region • March 2019

Restoring and protecting the Great Lakes is an enduring, bipartisan priority for the people of the Great Lakes region. Our organizations support these priorities to sustain progress and maintain the Great Lakes as an economic engine and environmental treasure.



## Fully fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

The popular, bipartisan GLRI is producing results and creating jobs by cleaning up contaminated sites, addressing threats from Asian carp and other invasive species, preventing polluted runoff that causes toxic algae, restoring habitat for valuable fish and wildlife and paving the way for economic development in waterfront communities. In fact, GLRI spending is projected to generate more than \$3 in long-term economic activity for every dollar invested. Much work remains, however, and Congress and the President should sustain this successful program. *Appropriate at least \$300 million for the GLRI in FY 2020 to advance restoration and protection of our Great Lakes.*

## Maintain federal agency capacity to effectively protect and manage the Great Lakes

Many federal agencies collaborate with state and local partners to manage and protect the Great Lakes. The GLRI is critical for accelerating restoration efforts, but it must not supplant core federal programs. Base agency budgets must be maintained for federal agencies such as U.S. EPA, NOAA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army Corps of Engineers to clean up the Great Lakes, respond to new threats, and promote their economic benefits. *Maintain funding for base agency programs that protect the Great Lakes.*

## Support conservation programs in the new Farm Bill

Agricultural conservation programs are critical for protecting water quality, enhancing wildlife habitat and sustaining a strong farm economy. They help farmers keep soil and nutrients on the land, which prevents harmful algal blooms. The 2018 Farm Bill strengthened vital conservation programs, such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which targets the Great Lakes as a "critical conservation area." *Support funding for the RCPP and other conservation programs authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill to ensure they meet farmer demand to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.*

## Invest in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure

The Great Lakes region faces a \$179 billion backlog to maintain and modernize drinking water, stormwater and wastewater systems. Aging sewer systems release sewage and stormwater into the Great Lakes every year, and communities are confronting emerging threats from PFAS and other toxic pollutants. Water rates have doubled or tripled for many families. *Boost funding for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act program; promote green infrastructure and interagency collaboration; support flexible financing options for utilities and programs to enhance affordability for ratepayers; and improve monitoring for PFAS and support cleanups at military bases, airports and other PFAS hot-spots.*

## Protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp and other harmful aquatic invasive species

The introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) continue to threaten the environmental and economic health of the Great Lakes. *Fully fund the Asian Carp Action Plan and other programs to prevent and control AIS, including the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's sea lamprey control program and monitoring and eradication of grass carp. The Army Corps of Engineers should work with Illinois as the nonfederal sponsor and the other Great Lakes states and stakeholders to finalize a plan for preventing Asian carp from moving through the Brandon Road Lock and Dam. Congress should provide funding to begin designing a plan at Brandon Road and authorize federal funding for its implementation.*

## Strengthen the Great Lakes navigation system

The Great Lakes navigation system is vital to our region's economy. Infrastructure for commercial navigation and recreational boating must be maintained and upgraded. Secure and resilient navigation structures, including a new full-size Soo lock, are needed to ensure reliable access to raw materials vital for manufacturing nationwide. *Provide funding to maintain and upgrade commercial ports, locks and other navigation infrastructure and recreational harbors, including funding for the newly authorized Soo lock, using ecologically protective measures.*



Great Lakes Fishery Commission



Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative



Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority



GREAT LAKES METRO CHAMBERS COALITION



Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus

