



June 24, 2021

The Honorable Thomas Carper, Chair  
Committee on Environment & Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member  
Committee on Environment & Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Carper and DeFazio, and Ranking Members Capito and Graves:

As you know, federal investment in the infrastructure of the Great Lakes basin has greatly benefited the ecosystems and economies in our region. With the recent release of President Biden's infrastructure investment plan, we are encouraged that the Biden Administration recognizes the impact that additional investment in the Great Lakes will have on communities throughout our region.

Investments in water infrastructure, commercial navigation, environmental restoration, and resilience will create jobs, foster equity for underserved communities, and strengthen the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes region for future generations. Our agencies and organizations – representing the Great Lakes states, cities, conservation groups, ports, and business – strongly support robust investments in these areas. These investments will address longstanding basin-wide priorities while stimulating economic activity in hard-hit communities throughout our region.

As both chambers work to develop legislation that addresses these opportunities, we urge the House and Senate to include the following provisions in the final bill:

#### **Accelerate the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative**

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) remains a critically important program for the economic and environmental revitalization of the Great Lakes basin. We appreciate Congress' recent action to increase the program's authorization incrementally over the next five years. In addition to appropriating at least \$375 million for FY 2022, we urge Congress to provide an additional \$1.5 billion for Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs) for Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) and non-GLLA AOC projects likely to move ahead in FY22-FY25. This investment will accelerate progress on key priorities under the GLRI, such as cleaning up contaminated sediments and habitat restoration. Federal investments through GLRI have demonstrated a significant return on investment, with every dollar spent generating an estimated \$3.35 in additional economic activity.

#### **Invest in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure**

The eight Great Lakes states face a significant project backlog to maintain and upgrade drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure, which has a disproportionate effect on the health of underserved communities. Investing in water infrastructure will address longstanding needs while creating jobs, fostering equity, protecting public health and strengthening local economies. For example, U.S. EPA recently announced that financing administered under the WIFIA program has created more than 15,000 jobs.

We urge Congress to include the following investments in any upcoming infrastructure legislation:

- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund - \$10 billion per year
- Clean Water State Revolving Fund - \$10 billion per year
- Lead service line replacement - \$45 billion
- WIFIA - \$50 million per year
- Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant program - \$400 million per year
- PFAS Monitoring & Remediation - \$300 million per year

We also urge Congress to prioritize projects and programs in underserved communities that advance equitable access to affordable, clean, safe drinking water.

**Ensure the Great Lakes economy, environment, and communities are resilient to the impacts of a changing climate**

Communities across the Great Lakes basin are heavily impacted by erosion, flooding and other effects from high lake levels and extreme weather events. Lake levels remain high and are expected to fluctuate more rapidly in the future. At the same time, storm events are becoming more frequent and severe, compounding the effects of fluctuating lake levels, which were at record lows less than a decade ago. Investments in shoreline resilience will enable Great Lakes states and localities to prepare for, respond to and build resilience to current and future impacts from high lake levels and severe weather events. This will address an urgent need for which other resources are not available. Investments in this area have high rates of job creation and have an excellent return on investment for taxpayers. Investments in resilience and mitigation are estimated to pay back to the taxpayer more than \$6 for every \$1 spent and create 39 jobs per \$1 million spent.

We urge Congress to include the following resilience investments in any upcoming infrastructure legislation:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study - \$10 million
- Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act grants - \$100 million per year
- NOAA’s Coastal Zone Management Program, National Ocean and Coastal Security Fund, Army Corps of Engineers Flood Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration authorities, and other federal programs that enable states and local communities to safeguard coastal resources and mitigate future damage from erosion, flooding, and severe storm events -- \$500 million

**Strengthen Great Lakes ports and the maritime transportation system**

The Great Lakes Navigation System is a critical component of global supply chains and connects Great Lakes communities to the world economy, supporting nearly 150,000 American jobs and generating more than \$25 billion in economic activity. Investments in the Great Lakes Navigation System will create jobs and modernize an important sector of our regional economy.

We urge Congress to include the following investments in any upcoming infrastructure legislation:

- Port Infrastructure Development Program - \$750 million per year
- Construct a new Great Lakes Icebreaker - \$350 million
- Complete construction of the new Soo Lock - \$960 million
- Repair the existing Soo Locks - \$225 million
- Eliminate the regional dredging backlog - \$375 million
- Repair and rehabilitate Great Lakes navigation structures, including breakwaters and jetties - \$320 million

We are encouraged by Congress’ previous bipartisan approach to protecting and restoring the Great Lakes, which is a critical water resource and economic driver for the entire continent. We look forward to working with you as this process unfolds. Thank you for your continued support of the Great Lakes basin.

Respectfully Submitted:

Great Lakes Commission	Great Lakes Fishery Commission	Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition	Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative	American Great Lakes Ports Association	Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition	Great Lakes- St. Lawrence Legislative Caucus
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