



November 10, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madame Speaker and Mr. Majority Leader:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we strongly encourage that as you move forward with an economic stimulus package for our nation, you include at least \$6.5 billion for water and wastewater infrastructure projects, which is what the House provided in H.R. 7110 in September. We also urge you to set aside at least \$1 billion or one-fifth of water infrastructure funds for green infrastructure projects.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition is a group of over 100 national, regional, and local organizations working to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The Coalition represents millions of Americans that live near, work near and love this national treasure.

The health of the Great Lakes is threatened by untreated sewage contamination every day. More than 23 billion gallons of raw sewage was dumped into the Great Lakes in 2006 because of old and antiquated waste water treatment facilities in the region. Bacteria from sewage close Great Lakes beaches every summer. Further, climate change is expected to bring heavier rains that will inundate overtaxed waste water systems and lead to increased untreated sewage overflows in the Great Lakes. This amounts to polluting a resource that millions of Americans depend on for their jobs, drinking water and quality of life.

In 2005 the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration set a goal that the region would end untreated or inadequately treated wastewater from flowing into the Great Lakes by 2020. To help achieve that goal, the Collaboration recommended that Congress fully fund the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and create a special grant program in order to help meet the billions needed just in the Great Lakes watershed for wastewater treatment improvements.

The environmental and public health impact of improving aging water infrastructure is clear; less bacteria contaminating and closing beaches, and making people sick. The economic benefit is equally clear: repairing aging water infrastructure puts people to work. It's estimated that for each \$1 billion invested in clean water infrastructure, 47,000 jobs are generated.

There are other economic benefits worth noting. Great Lakes beaches generate jobs and billions in local revenue. Small businesses providing beach-related services generate hundreds of millions of dollars – and summer jobs – every year. Clean water is also critical to marinas and Great Lakes boating, which generated \$16 billion in direct revenue in 2003. Closing a beach or marina because of a sewer overflow puts all this at risk.

The Brookings Institution also pointed out in a 2007 study that investing in fixing aging sewer infrastructure and taking other restoration actions in the Great Lakes leads to an economic return between

\$50 to \$80 billion dollars every year. As the report noted, "...the rejuvenation of the Great Lakes and its waterways has the potential to pay important dividends for the region."

Although we look forward to Congress including significant funds for water and wastewater infrastructure in the much-needed economic stimulus package, we also think Congress should prioritize those funds to where they are needed most.

First, Congress' priority should be to fund the repair and replacement of the oldest infrastructure first; projects that finish the job of eliminating combined sewer overflows (CSOs). The EPA estimates that over seventy five percent of needs to control CSOs were reported in Illinois, New York, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New Jersey. Some of these states have the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

Second, Congress must not miss the opportunity to fund water and wastewater infrastructure projects that support alternative measures than just traditional engineering solutions to these problems. Cities around the country and especially in the Great Lakes region are using green infrastructure techniques to reduce storm water flows into combined systems. We hope that at least \$1.0 billion or one-fifth of the money made available in the stimulus package, whichever is greater, goes towards supporting green infrastructure efforts that include on-site source controls, stream buffers, conservations practices, water reuse and other approaches to prevent pollution.

The stimulus package being prepared by Congress can put people to work, improve our nation's infrastructure, and restore and protect the Great Lakes. We strongly encourage that as you move forward with an economic stimulus package, you include significant funding for projects that replaces our water and wastewater infrastructure with a system ready for the 21st century.

We appreciate your attention to our request. If you have any questions about our position or our Coalition, please do not hesitate to have you staff contact Chad Lord, policy director for the HOW Coalition, at 202-454-3385 or clord@npca.org or Jeff Skelding, coalition campaign director, at jskelding@nwf.org or 202-797-6893.

Sincerely,

Alliance for the Great Lakes

Joel Brammeier, Vice President for Policy

Audubon New York

Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director

Biodiversity Project

Jennifer Browning, Executive Director

Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo

Stuart D. Strahl, Ph.D., President and CEO

Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director

Clean Wisconsin

Melissa Malott, Water Programs Director

County Executives of America
Mike Griffin, Executive Director

Environmental Advocates of New York
Katherine Nadeau, Water & Natural Resources
Program Associate

Environmental Consulting and Technology, Inc.
Sanjiv K. Sinha, Ph.D., P.E., Vice President

Flint River Watershed Coalition
Rebecca Fedewa, Executive Director

Freshwater Future
Jill Ryan, Executive Director

Friends of the St. Clair River Watershed
Janice Littlefield,

Friends of Yellow Creek
Maryanne R. Rackoff, Chair

Great Lakes Boating Federation
F. Ned Dikmen, President

Great Lakes United
John Jackson, Program Director

Izaak Walton League of America, Ohio Division
Rick Graham, President

Lake Erie Region Conservancy
Tom Fuhrman, Executive Director

Lake Michigan Interleague Organization
Judith Johnson and Jeanette Neagu, Co-Presidents

Michigan Wildlife Conservancy
Dennis Fijalkowski, Executive Director

Midwest Environmental Advocates
Karen M. Schapiro, JD, Executive Director

Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Cheryl Nenn, Riverkeeper

National Parks Conservation Association
Chad Lord, Policy Director, Healing Our Waters
Great Lakes Coalition

National Wildlife Federation
Jeff Skelding, Director, Healing Our Waters Great
Lakes Coalition

Nature Quebec
Marc Hudon, Director, Great Lakes/St-Lawrence
Program

Onsite Wastewater of Northwest Michigan
Dendra J. Best, Executive Director

Presque Isle Audubon Society
Paul Burroughs, Conservation Chair

Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes
Irene Senn, Founder

River Alliance of Wisconsin
Denny Caneff, Executive Director

Save the Dunes Council
Tom Anderson, Executive Director

Save the River
Jennifer Caddick, Executive Director

Sierra Club
Emily Green, Director, Great Lakes Program

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
Grenetta Thomassey, Policy Director

Town and Country Resource Conservation & Development, Inc.
Lisa Conley, Past President

Western Lake Erie Association
Sandy Bihn, Executive Director

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
George Meyer, Executive Director