



April 14, 2010

The Honorable Mark H. Schauer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schauer:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we write in support of your amendment to H.R. 4715, the Clean Estuaries Act of 2010. Your amendment will ensure that the Great Lakes are treated equally under the National Estuary Program.

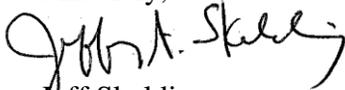
Currently, the National Estuary Program (NEP) applies to marine coastal estuaries only. By redefining "estuary" under the Clean Water Act, your amendment will ensure Great Lakes near shore and connecting waters are treated similarly to traditional estuaries covered by the NEP. Specifically, the amendment you are offering simply makes Great Lakes "estuaries" eligible to apply on a competitive basis for inclusion in the NEP program.

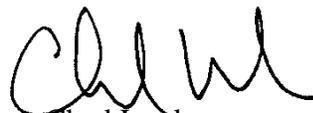
As you are well aware, there is a tremendous need to restore and protect these internationally important waters. Since some of the Great Lakes waters are similar in form and function to traditional estuaries, it makes sense that they should be eligible to apply for inclusion in the NEP.

Traditionally, estuaries are transition zones along our coasts between fresh water from rivers and saline water from oceans. Regardless of whether it's a traditional mix of fresh and saltwater or fresh water areas that are similar, all estuaries provide a unique environment that supports diverse habitats for a wide variety of plants and animals. They also protect water quality and provide a buffer against erosion, which protects our marine coastal communities during extreme weather events. Also, healthy estuaries provide recreational opportunities, essential wildlife habitat, and commercial and recreational fishing.

Thank you for your leadership in protecting and restoring the Great Lakes. We are proud to support your amendment and hope all Great Lakes members join you in your efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact Chad Lord, our Coalition's policy director, at 202-454-3385 if you have questions.

Sincerely,


Jeff Skelding
Campaign Director


Chad Lord
Policy Director