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October 21, 2010

Dear Representative:

The undersigned members and allies of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes (HOW) Coalition ask you to support funding the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) at last year's funding level of $475 million in the final FY 2011 omnibus appropriations bill. The introduction and enactment of the GLRI has propelled Great Lakes restoration forward. Continued support from members of Congress is critical to accelerate Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The support that the President and Congress provided in FY 2010 for the GLRI has energized the region like at no other time, and the Great Lakes community is responding by working to implement the restoration plan for the Great Lakes developed five years ago. Project by project, communities are benefiting from successful restoration activities in the form of increased economic benefits and better quality of life. Restoration projects are creating jobs in many disciplines, from civil engineers to wetland biologists, truck drivers to concrete workers. These good-paying jobs not only benefit the economy in the short term; they lay the foundation for long-term prosperity. According to the Brookings Institution, every $1 investment in Great Lakes restoration leads to at least $2 in economic return for the regional economy in the form of increased fishing and tourism, higher property values, and economic development.

The need for Great Lakes restoration remains greater than ever. The health of the Lakes continues to be seriously threatened by untreated sewage, toxic pollution, and invasive species, perhaps none more urgent and potentially devastating than that of the non-native Asian carp. Restoration needs far outweigh available funding, which was made evident by the EPA's recent request for proposals under the GLRI, when the demand for funding outpaced the supply by more than 7-to-1. The eight states that border the Great Lakes and numerous cities, tribes, and non-governmental organizations have invested a significant amount of time and resources in protecting these iconic waters. Additional funding, however, is needed. Unless the federal government continues to invest in the lakes, these problems will get worse and the price we pay to solve them will be higher.

Consistent, long-term support is needed if we are to see the type of progress we know we can make by funding Great Lakes restoration. Our Coalition's new report titled "Progress and Promise" tells the stories of successful restoration projects that can be replicated if the GLRI receives level funding this fiscal year. (The report can be found at: http://www.healthylakes.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Success-Stories-Report-v7.pdf).

We ask again for you to support last year's funding level of $475 million for the GLRI in FY 2011. Please do not hesitate to contact Chad Lord, our Coalition's policy director, at (202) 454-3385 or clord@npca.org with questions.

Sincerely,

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