

Dear Administrator Pruitt,

As members of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, we are writing to express our great concern about reports that the Environmental Protection Agency's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget might include drastic cuts to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program, which enjoys bipartisan and bicameral support. It is our understanding that an initial budget blueprint only included \$10 million for the Initiative, which if accurate, would be 97 percent below the \$300 million Congress appropriated in FY 2016 and in previous fiscal years.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is the largest investment in the Great Lakes' health, ecosystem, and water quality. Since its inception in 2010, \$1.6 billion has been used to fund 3,068 projects to combat the greatest threats to the Great Lakes, including invasive species, harmful algal blooms and loss of fish and wildlife habitats. In targeting Areas of Concern, the program has successfully addressed problems that directly impact the public health and safety including beach closings, restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption, dredging restrictions, and problems with drinking water taste, odor and consumption. As the world's largest freshwater body, the Great Lakes provide drinking water for 40 million people, contribute \$10 billion in tourism each year, and support hundreds of thousands of jobs across the region. Due to the importance of this Initiative in protecting our Great Lakes, Congress authorized the program as part of the Waster Infrastructure Improvements for the Nations Act (P.L. 114-322) for five years at \$300 million.

As part of your confirmation hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, we were pleased by the clear support you expressed for the program in response to a question submitted for the record. As you begin your tenure as EPA Administrator, we hope that you will continue to support the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative by fully funding this program in the upcoming budget request.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you on this program of vital importance to the Great Lakes and all of our states.

Cc: Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget