

March X, 2018

Honorable Ken Calvert  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
2205 Rayburn Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Betty McCollum  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
2256 Rayburn Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

We write to respectfully request that you provide \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in the Fiscal Year 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

The Great Lakes are truly a national treasure. The Great Lakes are the largest freshwater system in the world, holding roughly 18 percent of the world's fresh water supply and 90 percent of the United States' fresh water supply. The Lakes are also an economic driver that supports jobs, commerce, agriculture, transportation, and tourism for millions of people across the country. More than a century of environmental damage has taken a significant toll on the Great Lakes, which the GLRI is helping to correct. Since the initiative was launched in 2010, GLRI funds have been used to support almost 3,500 restoration projects to improve water quality, protect and restore native habitat, clean up environmentally-impaired Areas of Concern, fight invasive species, and prevent beach closings.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is showing real and measurable results, but there is still a great deal of work to do. The Great Lakes Basin is vulnerable to various pollutants and invasive species, which threaten the health of the Great Lakes. For example, in 2014 a toxic algal bloom in Lake Erie forced 400,000 residents in the Toledo area to go without home water service for three days. While there has not been a repeat of shutting down the water system, the blooms are not abating. At the peak of last summer's bloom, over 1,000 square kilometers of Lake Erie was affected. While the GLRI has prioritized monitoring efforts, which help drinking water treatment plant operators and beach managers minimize health impacts associated with these toxic algal blooms, more must be done to better understand and prevent these algal blooms in the future.

The federal government commits significant resources each year to address the challenges the Great Lakes face. In particular, GLRI resources have supplemented agency budgets to fund coordinated efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes ecosystem, and we must ensure that this important work continues. Halting this commitment would reverse years of progress, dramatically reduce the GLRI's impact, and jeopardize the environmental and economic health of the region.

To that end, we urge you to continue this vital investment in the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes by including \$300 million for the GLRI in the Fiscal Year 2019 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

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Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress

David P. Joyce  
Member of Congress