

November xx, 2018

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

We write to express our strong support for efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes. As you finalize the budget request for FY 2020, we respectfully request that you include \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

A true national treasure, the Great Lakes are the largest freshwater system in the world. They make up 18 percent of the world's freshwater supply and 90 percent of the United States' freshwater supply. The Great Lakes are also an economic driver that supports jobs, commerce, agriculture, transportation, and tourism for millions of people across the country. A new report by economists from University of Michigan, Central Michigan University, and Duke University that was released this fall demonstrated a three-to-one return on our congressional GLRI investment. According to the report, environmental restoration of our nation's largest source of drinking water is creating new real estate and commercial development, particularly in waterfront areas, resulting in a resurgence in water-based, outdoor recreation and increasing tourism across the region, increasing housing options and home values, and increasing the number of young people remaining in or relocating to Great Lakes communities.

In the eight years the GLRI has been in place, funds have been used to support nearly 4,200 restoration projects across the basin. These projects address longstanding environmental challenges confronting the Lakes and focus on various clean-up and mitigation efforts. Funding has mobilized efforts to improve water quality, protect native habitats, address phosphorous and nitrogen runoff, prevent and combat the spread of invasive species, and aide clean-up efforts in designated Areas of Concern.

While the GLRI is producing real and measurable results, there is still a great deal of work to do. Lake Michigan is vulnerable to Asian carp, an invasive species that has been migrating north through the Mississippi River; there are designated Areas of Concern that require clean-up; water quality and wetlands loss remains an ongoing issue for the environment and outdoor economy; and toxic algal blooms caused by agricultural runoff and other nonpoint sources threaten Lake Erie and waterways across the region. Funding the GLRI is critical to addressing ongoing environmental concerns that threaten public health, water quality, wildlife, and economic disruption.

Congress has consistently recognized the importance and success of the GLRI by providing funding at authorized levels each fiscal year. Furthermore, we appreciate the Environmental Protection Agency's acknowledgement in its FY 2016 Report to Congress that the GLRI is

producing results and is doing so without choosing between the health of the Great Lakes and the health of the economy. Halting any commitment to the GLRI would reverse years of progress, dramatically reduce its impact, and jeopardize the environmental and economic vitality of the region.

In August, Acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the overall goals of improving the quality of the Great Lakes are a priority to the Administration. The GLRI is central to achieving this goal. In order to build on past successes, we urge the Administration to support this important effort and include \$300 million for the GLRI in its FY 2020 budget request.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,