

March 20, 2020

Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable David P. Joyce
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

We write to respectfully request that you provide at least \$335 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in the Fiscal Year 2021 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

The Great Lakes are a true national treasure we must continue to prioritize and protect. These waters—Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, and Lake Superior—comprise the largest surface freshwater system in the world, holding nearly 21 percent of the world’s fresh water supply and 90 percent of the United States’ fresh water supply. The Lakes are an economic driver that supports jobs, commerce, agriculture, transportation, and tourism for millions of people across the country. A 2018 report showed that every GLRI dollar spent through 2016 in cleaning up toxic hot spots in Areas of Concern (AOC), controlling invasive species, restoring wildlife habitat, protecting wetlands, and reducing harmful algae will produce more than \$3 in additional economic activity through 2036.¹

In addition to measurable economic results, the GLRI is producing significant environmental benefits for our region. Three AOCs have been delisted under the GLRI and all cleanup actions for eight more are complete. The number of beneficial use impairments, which are benchmarks for environmental harm in AOCs, that were removed increased more than seven times under the GLRI. Over 5,000 river miles have been cleared of dams and other barriers reconnecting fish to important habitat.

Even with the results from over 5,300 projects, there is still much work to do. Nineteen AOCs are still contaminated with toxic sediment, stunting the development and threatening the health of too many Great Lakes communities. Runoff from sources including farm fields, septic systems, and other sources continue to pollute our waters causing increasingly larger toxic algae outbreaks each year that threatens water systems, public health, and economic vitality. Habitat loss and aquatic invasive species continue to damage our region’s outdoor way of life.

The federal government must continue to partner with the region to address the challenges the Great Lakes face, now and in the future. GLRI resources have supplemented agency budgets and

¹ University of Michigan. 2018. “Socioeconomic Impacts of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.” Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics.

funded coordinated efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes ecosystem. Support for the Great Lakes and GLRI has long seen strong bipartisan support in Congress. This year, Democrats and Republicans, came together to advance H.R. 4031, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2019, which would reauthorize GLRI at increasingly robust levels of funding over the next five fiscal years culminating in an increased level to \$475 million.

We must ensure GLRI funding and all the good work it inspires continues long into the future. Halting or reducing this commitment would reverse years of progress, dramatically reducing the GLRI's impact, and jeopardize the environmental and economic health of the region for generations to come.

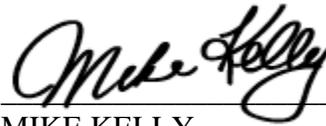
To that end, we urge you to continue this vital investment in the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes by including at least \$335 million for the GLRI in the Fiscal Year 2021 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress



MIKE KELLY
Member of Congress



DANIEL T. KILDEE
Member of Congress



MIKE GALLAGHER
Member of Congress

Member of Congress

**FY2021 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Request
List of Signatories
March 20, 2020**

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