



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

March 14, 2008

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
132 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Wayne Allard
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
123 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Madam Chairman and Ranking Member:

As members of the Great Lakes delegation, we are writing to express our strong support for programs in the Department of Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency that protect the human health as well as fish and wildlife resources in the Great Lakes. In particular, we ask that you consider the following requests.

- **We urge the Committee to provide full funding (\$54 million) for the Great Lakes Legacy Program.**

The Great Lakes are plagued by contaminants from years of industrial pollution that have settled into the sediments of tributaries to the lakes. These pollutants degrade the health of both humans and wildlife. The worst of these polluted areas are known as Areas of Concern (AOC). The Great Lakes Legacy Act was enacted in 2002 in order for the EPA to clean-up contaminated sediments at the AOCs in the Great Lakes. This program also demonstrates the ability of federal funding to leverage significant private funds as there is a 35-50 percent non-federal cost-share requirement for each project. We support full funding (\$54 million) for the Great Lakes Legacy program. The EPA completed the first Legacy project in November of 2005, and of the seven projects that have received funding, EPA estimates that over 1.2 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment will be removed. In FY-08, the program received \$35.0 million, and the President included \$35 million in his proposed budget for FY-09.

- **We urge the Committee to provide \$16 million for the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Program.**

The Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act was reauthorized in 2006. The Act calls for the implementation of proposals that restore the fish and wildlife resources in the Great Lakes Basin based on the Great Lakes Fishery Restoration Study and authorizes grants to encourage cooperative conservation, restoration and management of the fish and wildlife resources and their habitat in the Great Lakes Basin. A new component of this program

authorizes the implementation of regional projects that benefit more than just one state. One proposed regional project, the "Great Lakes Mass Marking Initiative," is a cooperative undertaking among federal, state, and tribal authorities to employ new technologies to mark all hatchery reared fish that are stocked into the Great Lakes. Currently, not all stocked fish are marked or coded-wire-tagged, which limits the information fishery managers have about the status of the fishery and their restoration efforts. The Fish and Wildlife Service will only be able to implement restoration projects and meet the purposes of the Act if additional funding is provided. In FY-08, \$1.69 million was appropriated for this program, and the Administration's FY-09 budget proposed \$1.69 million.

- **We request that the Committee provide \$25 million for EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office.**

The Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) is responsible for overseeing the U.S. commitment to the U.S.—Canadian Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, establishing a Great Lakes system-wide surveillance network to monitor water quality, serving as the liaison with the International Joint Commission, and coordinating EPA's Great Lakes activities as well as coordinating those activities with other Federal, State and Local authorities. Additionally, GLNPO is responsible for implementing the Great Lakes Legacy Program, and it has considerable responsibility for implementing Executive Order 13340 which was signed in an effort to improve coordination of all of the federal Great Lakes programs. GLNPO carries out a program that combines research and monitoring with education and outreach, and supports grants for specific activities to enhance and protect the Great Lakes environment. Approximately 60 percent of GLNPO's budget is allocated towards making grants and cooperative agreements to organizations in the state, tribal, or local sector. GLNPO received \$21.26 million in FY-08, and the FY-09 proposed budget provides \$22.26 million, a small increase that hardly keeps up with the cost of living increases. To meet the growing demand for work on the Great Lakes, additional funding is needed.

- **We request that the Committee provide \$13.25 million for the US Geological Survey's Great Lakes Science Center.**

The mission of the Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) is to develop the knowledge and technical basis for assessing, protecting, enhancing and rehabilitating the valuable fish resources and habitats of the Great Lakes. The GLSC conducts long-term monitoring of fish stocks and provides critical information to Great Lakes managers. This work requires the use of research vessels on each of the Great Lakes, and the GLSC is the only Federal facility maintaining research vessels on each of the lakes, and these research vessels provide critical information to determine fish harvests. The base budget for the Science Center is greatly underfunded, and without additional funding, the GLSC will be unable to conduct its fish surveys to establish fishing quotas. In FY-08, the GLSC received \$8.4 million, and the proposed FY-09 budget provides \$8.4 million.

The work carried out by the EPA and the FWS is of critical importance to the sustainability of the Great Lakes' natural resources. We urge the Committee to carefully

consider these requests and thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have questions, please contact Joy Mulinex at 224-1211.

Sincerely,


George V. Voinovich


Carl Levin


Richard J. Durbin


Debbie Stabenow

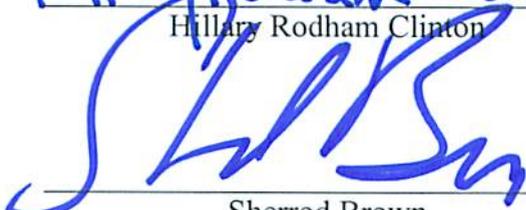

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