April 7, 2015

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2256 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum,

As members of the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus from the Great Lakes states, we are writing to express our very strong support for the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The Great Lakes Legislative Caucus is a nonpartisan, binational organization of state and provincial legislators from the eight states and two Canadian provinces that share the Great Lakes. As state legislators from the Great Lakes region, we are keenly aware of the ecological and economic importance of the Great Lakes to our states. They are a source of drinking water for nearly 40 million people in two nations. According to the 2011 “Great Lakes Jobs Report,” over 1.5 million jobs are directly connected to the lakes, generating $62 billion annually in wages in manufacturing, tourism, shipping, and other industries. Our Great Lakes are both a natural wonder and a vital economic engine that deserve our unwavering support.

The GLRI enables vital work to proceed in cleaning up toxic sites, reducing runoff that contributes to harmful algal blooms, restoring habitat, and preventing and controlling invasive species. To continue this work, we feel very strongly that GLRI funding in the FY 2016 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill should, at a minimum, be maintained at $300 million consistent with FY 2015 funding. Since its inception in 2010, the GLRI has been responsible for a great deal of progress, perhaps most notably the cleanup of toxic hotspots, or Areas of Concern (AOCs), around the lakes. Our states and local communities benefit directly from the work being funded by the initiative, including several projects that have led to the delisting of Pennsylvania’s Presque Isle Bay AOC and the Deer Lake and White Lake AOCs in Michigan. GLRI-funded projects also have led to the completion of cleanup activities at three additional AOCs in Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin, with ten additional projects slated to be completed by 2019. To complete these and other GLRI projects for the benefit of our region’s economy and the environment, consistent funding must be maintained.

We also voice our strong support for legislation to authorize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Formal authorization of the GLRI will provide greater coordination and continuity for restoration and protection projects, thereby improving the health of our region’s most-
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treasured natural resource. We are very pleased to see that bills have been introduced in both the House and the Senate to authorize the GLRI through FY 2020, and that both bills have bipartisan support from members of Congress from the Great Lakes region. By copy of this letter to the Congressional delegations from the Great Lakes states, we encourage their action in support of the GLRI and its authorization.

We appreciate your leadership and your attention to this matter. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our position on the GLRI. If you have any questions about this letter or wish to arrange a time to meet, please contact Lisa Janairo at 920.458.5910.

Sincerely,

Representative Cory Mason, Wisconsin  
Chair, Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

Representative Laura Fine, Illinois

Representative Elaine Nekritz, Illinois

Senator Jim Arnold, Indiana

Representative David Niezgodski, Indiana

Representative Christine Greig, Michigan

Representative Jeff Irwin, Michigan

Representative Amanda Price, Michigan

Representative Sarah Roberts, Michigan

Senator Darwin Booher, Michigan  
Vice Chair, Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

Representative Robyn Gabel, Illinois

Senator Donne E. Trotter, Illinois

Senator John Broden, Indiana

Senator Tom Casperson, Michigan

Representative Marcia Hovey-Wright, Michigan

Senator Phil Pavlov, Michigan

Representative Al Pscholka, Michigan

Senator Rebekah Warren, Michigan
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Representative Rick Hansen, Minnesota
Senator Ann H. Rest, Minnesota
Representative JoAnn Ward, Minnesota
Senator Capri Cafaro, Ohio

Representative John Patterson, Ohio
Senator Michael J. Skindell, Ohio
Representative Peter Barca, Wisconsin
Senator Janet Bewley, Wisconsin
Representative Eric Genrich, Wisconsin
Senator Chris Larson, Wisconsin
Representative Tod Ohnstad, Wisconsin
Representative Melissa Sargent, Wisconsin
Senator Lena C. Taylor, Wisconsin

Representative Joe Mullery, Minnesota
Senator Matt Schmit, Minnesota
Senator Edna Brown, Ohio
Senator Cliff Hite, Ohio
Representative Dan Ramos, Ohio
Representative Curt Sonney, Pennsylvania
Representative Mandela Barnes, Wisconsin
Representative Dave Considine, Wisconsin
Representative Debra Kolste, Wisconsin
Representative Nick Milroy, Wisconsin
Representative Daniel Riemer, Wisconsin
Representative Christine Sinicki, Wisconsin
Representative JoCasta Zamarripa, Wisconsin

cc: U.S. Congressional Delegations from the Great Lakes States