

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 20, 2026

Honorable Mike Simpson
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Chellie Pingree
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Simpson and Ranking Member Pingree:

We write to respectfully request that the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies provide the anticipated authorized amount of \$475 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in its Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations bill.

The Great Lakes are a true natural treasure and critical resource 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 freshwater supply and 90 percent of the United States’ freshwater 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 2036¹. In addition to directly creating or supporting, on average, more than 5,000 jobs per year.

In addition to measurable economic results, the GLRI is producing significant environmental and public health benefits for our region. Six AOCs have been delisted under the GLRI and all cleanup actions for nine more are complete. The number of beneficial use impairments, which are benchmarks for environmental harm in AOCs, removed has increased nearly twelve-fold under the GLRI. Over 8,000 river miles have been cleared of dams and other barriers reconnecting fish to important habitats. More than 500 million gallons of untreated runoff and more than 2 million pounds of phosphorus, a significant contributor to harmful algal blooms in the Great Lakes, have been mitigated and captured through GLRI implemented projects in priority watersheds.

Even with the results from over 8,100 projects across the eight Great Lakes states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin; there is still much work to do. Fifteen 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

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

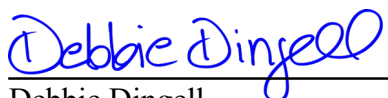
causing increasingly larger toxic algae outbreaks each year that threatens water systems, public health, and economic vitality. Habitat loss and aquatic invasive species continue to damage our region's outdoor way of life.

Support for the Great Lakes and GLRI has long seen strong bipartisan support in Congress, receiving overwhelming support when it was reauthorized under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2019 (P.L. 116-294) through FY 2026. 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 \$475 million for the GLRI in the Fiscal Year 2027 Interior and Environment appropriations bill as authorized. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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Sincerely,



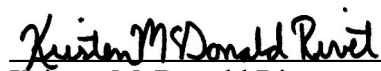
Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



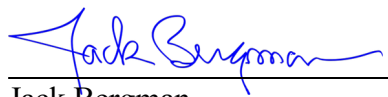
Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Gwen S. Moore
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Kristen McDonald Rivet
Member of Congress



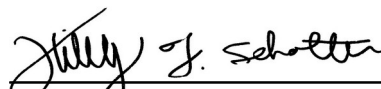
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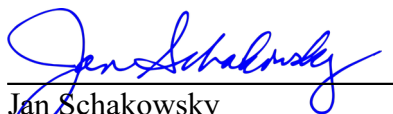
Rashida Tlaib
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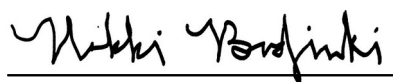
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Member of Congress

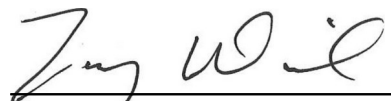


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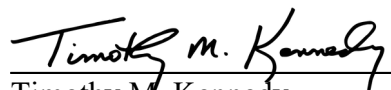

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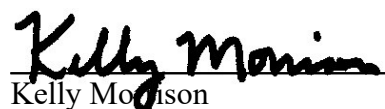
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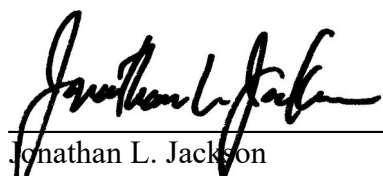
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