

Region Unites for Congressional Action on Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in President's Budget

Great Lakes Senators, Representatives Key to Lake Restoration, Economic Recovery

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (May 14, 2009)—Local, state, industry and conservation leaders called for the U.S. Congress to act to fund a new Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery initiative, unveiled last week with President Obama's budget.

"This is a precedent-setting restoration initiative from the president that will give the Great Lakes the medicine they need," said Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition co-chairman Andy Buchsbaum. "Now, we need Congress to fund it."

In announcing his budget last week, President Obama released details of a \$475 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to address some of the most urgent threats to the Great Lakes, including:

- \$146 million to clean up toxic substances and Areas of Concern.
- \$60 million to prevent or remove aquatic invasive species.
- \$97 million to improve near-shore health and pollution prevention.
- \$105 million for habitat and wildlife protection and restoration.
- \$65 million to evaluate and monitor progress.

"This new federal support will match the substantial funding that state and local governments are already investing in the Great Lakes," said Great Lakes Commission Board Member Sean Logan, director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. "Protecting and restoring the Great Lakes requires a strong partnership with the federal government. Ohio and our fellow Great Lakes states urge Congress to provide the requested funding."

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative invests in priorities that track closely with a comprehensive clean-up strategy that has won the endorsement of the eight-state region's mayors, governors, businesses, industry and environmental leaders—in part because of the growing awareness of the economic benefit of restoring the Lakes.

"Great Lakes restoration is good for the ecosystem and is good for the economy," said George Kuper, president, Council of Great Lakes Industries. "We are counting on our region's Congressional delegation to persuade Congress that this is the right time to do the right thing and support the \$475 million appropriation for Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery."

The Brookings Institution found that every dollar invested in implementing the region's comprehensive Great Lakes restoration strategy will lead to nearly a two dollar return in long-term economic benefit for the region.

"Our message to Congress is simple," said Dave Ullrich, executive director, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. "Local governments have a strategy and are willing and able to get to work to restore the Great Lakes, safeguard public health, and create jobs. It's time for Congress to move forward and act."

Great Lakes senators and representatives can play an important role in helping fund the initiative in the annual Congressional appropriations process.

Appropriators from eight Great Lakes states include U.S. Senators Herb Kohl (D-Wis.), Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), Arlen Specter (D-Pa.), and George Voinovich (R-Ohio).

U.S. representatives include David Obey (D-Wis.), Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), Peter Visclosky (D-Ind.), Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.), John Murtha (D-Pa.), Jose Serrano (D-N.Y.), Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.), Jesse Jackson (D-Ill.), Carolyn Kilpatrick (D-Mich.), Chaka Fattah (D-Pa.), Betty McCollum (D-Minn.), Steve Israel (D-N.Y.), Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Steve LaTourette (R-Ohio).

"The promise of accelerated Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery as outlined in the new restoration initiative depends on action by Congress," said Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition co-chairman Andy Buchsbaum. "The path forward is clear: Congressional action will benefit the millions of people who depend on this national resource for their jobs, drinking water and way of life, while delay will make the problems worse and the solutions more costly."

For more information, visit: <http://www.healthylakes.org/>

For Immediate Release:
May 14, 2009

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