



November 10, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madame Speaker and Mr. Majority Leader:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, we strongly encourage that as you move forward with an economic stimulus package for our nation, you include at least \$6.5 billion for water and wastewater infrastructure projects, which is what the House provided in H.R. 7110 in September. We also urge you to set aside at least \$1 billion or one-fifth of water infrastructure funds for green infrastructure projects.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition is a group of over 100 national, regional, and local organizations working to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The Coalition represents millions of Americans that live near, work near and love this national treasure.

The health of the Great Lakes is threatened by untreated sewage contamination every day. More than 23 billion gallons of raw sewage was dumped into the Great Lakes in 2006 because of old and antiquated waste water treatment facilities in the region. Bacteria from sewage close Great Lakes beaches every summer. Further, climate change is expected to bring heavier rains that will inundate overtaxed waste water systems and lead to increased untreated sewage overflows in the Great Lakes. This amounts to polluting a resource that millions of Americans depend on for their jobs, drinking water and quality of life.

In 2005 the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration set a goal that the region would end untreated or inadequately treated wastewater from flowing into the Great Lakes by 2020. To help achieve that goal, the Collaboration recommended that Congress fully fund the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and create a special grant program in order to help meet the billions needed just in the Great Lakes watershed for wastewater treatment improvements.

The environmental and public health impact of improving aging water infrastructure is clear; less bacteria contaminating and closing beaches, and making people sick. The economic benefit is equally clear: repairing aging water infrastructure puts people to work. It's estimated that for each \$1 billion invested in clean water infrastructure, 47,000 jobs are generated.

There are other economic benefits worth noting. Great Lakes beaches generate jobs and billions in local revenue. Small businesses providing beach-related services generate hundreds of millions of dollars – and summer jobs – every year. Clean water is also critical to marinas and Great Lakes boating, which generated \$16 billion in direct revenue in 2003. Closing a beach or marina because of a sewer overflow puts all this at risk.

The Brookings Institution also pointed out in a 2007 study that investing in fixing aging sewer infrastructure and taking other restoration actions in the Great Lakes leads to an economic return between



\$50 to \$80 billion dollars every year. As the report noted, "...the rejuvenation of the Great Lakes and its waterways has the potential to pay important dividends for the region."

Although we look forward to Congress including significant funds for water and wastewater infrastructure in the much-needed economic stimulus package, we also think Congress should prioritize those funds to where they are needed most.

First, Congress' priority should be to fund the repair and replacement of the oldest infrastructure first; projects that finish the job of eliminating combined sewer overflows (CSOs). The EPA estimates that over seventy five percent of needs to control CSOs were reported in Illinois, New York, Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New Jersey. Some of these states have the highest unemployment rates in the nation.

Second, Congress must not miss the opportunity to fund water and wastewater infrastructure projects that support alternative measures than just traditional engineering solutions to these problems. Cities around the country and especially in the Great Lakes region are using green infrastructure techniques to reduce storm water flows into combined systems. We hope that at least \$1.0 billion or one-fifth of the money made available in the stimulus package, whichever is greater, goes towards supporting green infrastructure efforts that include on-site source controls, stream buffers, conservations practices, water reuse and other approaches to prevent pollution.

The stimulus package being prepared by Congress can put people to work, improve our nation's infrastructure, and restore and protect the Great Lakes. We strongly encourage that as you move forward with an economic stimulus package, you include significant funding for projects that replaces our water and wastewater infrastructure with a system ready for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We appreciate your attention to our request. If you have any questions about our position or our Coalition, please do not hesitate to have you staff contact Chad Lord, policy director for the HOW Coalition, at 202-454-3385 or [clord@npca.org](mailto:clord@npca.org) or Jeff Skelding, coalition campaign director, at [jskelding@nwf.org](mailto:jskelding@nwf.org) or 202-797-6893.

Sincerely,

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