



Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs

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November 17, 2008

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Ensuring environmental and economic
prosperity for the Great Lakes-St.
Lawrence region through
communications, policy research and
development, and advocacy.

Dear Member of the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation:

I am writing on behalf of the Great Lakes Commission to urge you to include funding for critical Great Lakes infrastructure and environmental restoration needs in the economic stimulus package to be considered by Congress. As you know, the Great Lakes regional economy has been hard hit by the recent economic slowdown. Now, more than ever, we have an opportunity to create jobs, stimulate economic development and protect and restore fresh water resources in the eight-state Great Lakes region.

The Great Lakes are a vital economic asset for our region. The following are four critical areas where the economic stimulus package could support large-scale projects that can be implemented in the near term. These investments will stimulate job growth while strengthening the regional economy.

- Repair and Upgrade Failing Wastewater Infrastructure:** In 2006 more than 23 billion gallons of sewage was dumped into the Great Lakes from failing wastewater systems. This threatens public drinking water supplies, closes beaches, and damages valuable recreational opportunities. U.S. EPA estimates that more than \$200 billion is needed nationally to repair and upgrade wastewater infrastructure, including \$74 billion in the eight Great Lakes states. Increased funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) is essential to meet this goal. Not only will this help restore the Great Lakes, it will create jobs and revitalize urban areas in the Great Lakes region. For example, it is estimated that every billion dollars invested in clean water infrastructure generates 47,000 jobs. The Great Lakes Commission supports annual appropriations for the CWSRF of \$1.35 billion. In the near term, we endorse the funding included in the stimulus legislation passed by the House of Representatives in September (H.R. 7110), which provided \$6.5 billion nationally for the CWSRF, including nearly \$2.4 billion for the eight Great Lakes states. **REQUEST: Provide \$6.5 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.**
- Implement Toxic Sediment Cleanup Projects:** Contaminated sediments in the Great Lakes hamper waterfront development, restrict recreational opportunities, and threaten public health. Since 2002, cleanups funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act have removed nearly a million cubic yards of toxic sediments from rivers and harbors in the Great Lakes. These cleanups are creating jobs and stimulating economic development in Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Buffalo, Gary, Duluth and other urban areas. Cleaning up contaminated sediments is projected to increase coastal property values in the Great Lakes by \$12 to \$19 billion. With an infusion of federal funding, the Great Lakes states and other partners are prepared to implement many new cleanup projects in 2009. **REQUEST: Provide \$250 million to U.S. EPA for Great Lakes Legacy Act projects in 2009.**



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- **Begin Construction of a New Large Lock at Sault Ste. Marie:** Nearly 70 percent of U.S. commercial shipping on the Great Lakes is restricted to a single, large lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. This causes costly bottlenecks and would cripple core U.S. industries should the lock fail. Planning for a second large lock began in the 1980s and in 2007 Congress authorized full federal funding for its construction. The Army Corps of Engineers is prepared to begin construction in 2009 and projects that \$100 million is needed. This will generate up to 1,000 jobs a year for 10 years while upgrading and safeguarding a vital element in the Great Lakes economic infrastructure. ***REQUEST: Provide \$100 million to the Army Corps of Engineers.***
- **Maintain Great Lakes Ports and Navigation Channels:** For decades ports and navigation channels in the Great Lakes have not been adequately dredged. This weakens commercial navigation and threatens recreational boating in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. Commercial navigation generates more than \$3 billion annually in revenue and supports 150,000 jobs. The 911,000 recreational boaters on the Great Lakes spend \$2.35 billion per year on boating trips, \$1.44 billion per year on boats, equipment and supplies, and support 60,000 jobs. Approximately 18 million cubic yards of sediment need to be dredged from the Great Lakes at a cost of \$230 million. This work must be done responsibly and avoid practices – such as open-lake disposal of dredged material – that can harm the Great Lakes. Eliminating the dredging backlog will create jobs and strengthen industrial capacity in the Great Lakes region. ***REQUEST: Provide \$125 million to the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct environmentally sound dredging work in the Great Lakes.***

The Great Lakes are a vital component of the eight-state regional economy. Maximizing their economic benefits should be a key policy goal for the federal government. Toward this end, the Great Lakes region has united behind a comprehensive restoration plan for the Great Lakes. The Brookings Institution has estimated that fully implementing this plan will generate \$50 billion in long-term benefits for the region. Earlier this year 25 metropolitan Chambers of Commerce from the Great Lakes region released a *Business Agenda for Economic Transformation in the Great Lakes Region*. Among other federal economic policy priorities, they recommend increased federal funding for transportation infrastructure; and leveraging the Great Lakes and implementing the Great Lakes restoration strategy.

The investments we are recommending will advance both the Great Lakes restoration strategy and the business agenda for transforming the Great Lakes regional economy. They will also complement and leverage the estimated \$15 billion that local governments are investing annually in the Great Lakes.

We urge you to work with the Congressional leadership and key committee chairs to incorporate key Great Lakes investments into the economic stimulus package currently being developed. Should you have questions about our recommendations, please contact Tim Eder, executive director (teder@glc.org), or Matt Doss, (mdoss@glc.org) policy director, at 734-971-9135. Thank you for your support for the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,

Lt.Gov. Pat Quinn
Chairman