

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2013

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We applaud the Administration for releasing a climate action plan that charts a path for confronting climate change and takes the necessary steps for building a more resilient nation, but were disappointed that the Great Lakes were not mentioned in your plan. As you move forward with implementing your climate action plan, we urge you to fully incorporate the risks and impacts to the Great Lakes.

Climate change is a significant threat to the Great Lakes, which constitute 95% of the nation's surface fresh water supply, support 1.5 million direct jobs, provide 40 million people in the U.S. and Canada with drinking water, and serve as a natural and economic resource for millions.

This year, Great Lakes water levels reached new historic lows severely hampering commercial shipping, jeopardizing recreational boating and fishing, devastating the tourism industry, threatening electric power generation, compromising water supply infrastructure, and exacerbating problems caused by invasive species. In addition, severe spring storms in the Midwest resulted in flooding that damaged highways, homes, businesses, and public buildings. The heavy rains and flooding also ironically exacerbated shipping problems in the Great Lakes because the runoff from these storms resulted in excessive sedimentation, further restricting shipping channels. While we are pleased that your climate action plan would help make communities more resilient to flooding, it is disappointing that low water levels and the Great Lakes were not once mentioned in your plan, nor addressing the impacts they cause to shipping and the economy, water and energy supplies, shoreline integrity and the environment.

The impacts of climate change on the nation's largest freshwater system should not be overlooked. As you move forward with implementing your climate action plan, we urge you to fully incorporate the risks and impacts to the Great Lakes. In particular, the impacts of climate change on commerce and navigation should also be of utmost importance. The Great Lakes Navigation System carries over 160 million tons of cargo annually. If low water levels persist, harbors will continue to close and vessels will continue to light load, reducing our global competitiveness. Addressing the impacts of

climate change on the Great Lakes region is essential for ensuring the long-term health, safety, and prosperity of our country.

We appreciate your initiative and attention to this critical challenge facing our country and look forward to working with you on developing a plan to address issues specific to the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,



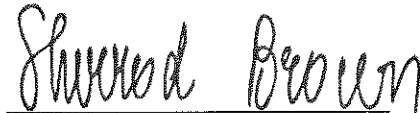
Richard J. Durbin



Carl Levin



Al Franken



Sherrod Brown



Charles E. Schumer



Debbie Stabenow

cc: The Honorable Nancy Sutley  
Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy  
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)