



GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

January 26, 2015

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy:

As Great Lakes Representatives, we write to call particular attention to two areas of priority, the Great Lakes Navigation System (GLNS) and the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program (GLFER), which are essential to the economic and environmental vitality of the Great Lakes. We ask that you give full consideration to these priorities in the Army Corps of Engineers' 2015 work plan.

GLNS:

The GLNS is the backbone of our nation's manufacturing, industrial, building, and agricultural economies. Each year, about 145 million tons of commodities are carried through the GLNS. The materials transported include fuel that powers homes and businesses, limestone and cement to construct roads and bridges, iron ore to produce steel, chemicals and other raw materials for manufacturers, and agricultural products to feed our nation and the world. This mode of transport has both economic and environmental advantages compared to alternative transportation options, supports about 130,000 jobs in the U.S., and generates over \$18 billion in revenues.

Despite the benefits the GLNS provides, inadequate funding and maintenance has resulted in a tremendous backlog of dredging projects that have forced vessels to light load, grounded vessels, impeded safe navigation, and closed harbors and threatened other harbors with closure. The impacts of the lack of dredging and other required maintenance, including lock improvements, breakwater repairs, and construction of dredged material disposal facilities, have economic consequences that hinder economic growth.

The Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 provided the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) with additional funding above the Administration's request for Civil Works Operations and Maintenance (O&M). Of these additional funds, \$165 million was provided for deep-draft harbor and channel maintenance, \$42.5 million was provided for small, remote, or subsistence maintenance, \$45 million was provided for navigation maintenance, and \$1.8 million was provided for regional sediment management programs. This totals almost \$255 million in additional O&M funding provided by the Congress for navigation-related programs applicable to the GLNS.

We believe that there are many GLNS projects which meet several of the criteria for evaluating projects for allocation of the additional O&M funding, as described in the explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015:

“The Corps...shall consider giving priority to the following: ability to complete ongoing work maintaining authorized depths and widths of harbors and shipping channels, including where contaminated sediments are present; ability to address critical maintenance backlog; presence of the U.S. Coast Guard; extent to which the work will enhance national, regional, or local economic development, including domestic manufacturing capacity;... number of jobs created directly by funded activity; ability to obligate funds allocated within the fiscal year, ability to complete the project, separable element, or project phase within funds allocated; the risk of imminent failure or closure of the facility; and for harbor maintenance activities, total tonnage handled, ...energy infrastructure and national security needs served, lack of alternative means of freight movement, and savings over alternative means of freight movement.”

In order to restore the functionality of the GLNS, we urge the Corps to allocate at least \$35 million from the above-described Congressionally-added appropriations to maintain navigational locks, harbor channels and structures, and connecting navigation channels within the GLNS. This request represents less than 15% of the additional funding provided for these programs.

GLFER:

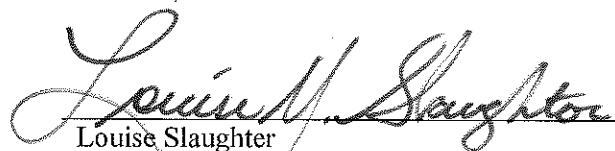
Great Lakes fisheries generate approximately \$7 billion annually in commercial and recreational economic activity that is vital communities both large and small throughout the Great Lakes region. Since the GLFER program was first authorized in section 506 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, it has proven to be highly effective for the purpose of restoring and maintaining the fisheries and ecosystem of the Great Lakes through invasive species control and habitat recovery. We strongly urge full support for FY15 GLFER projects that are ready for construction in your 2015 work plan.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We look forward to working with you to improve the Great Lakes as both an economic and ecological asset for our nation.

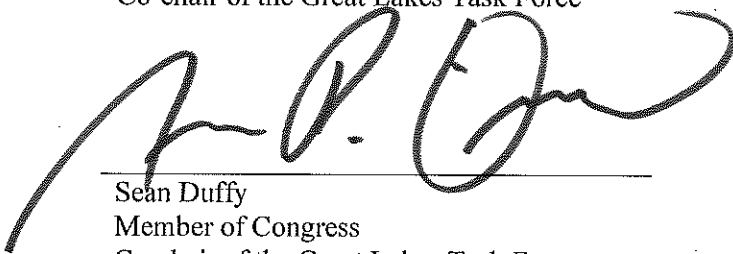
Sincerely,



Candice Miller
Member of Congress
Co-chair of the Great Lakes Task Force



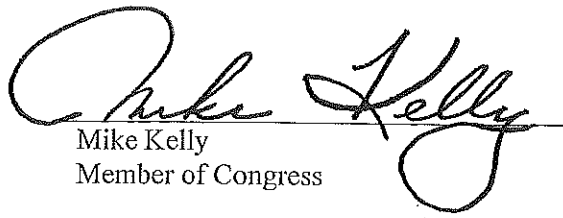
Louise Slaughter
Member of Congress
Co-chair of the Great Lakes Task Force




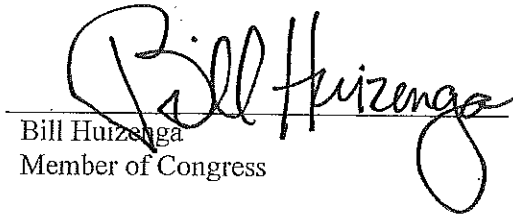
Sean Duffy
Member of Congress
Co-chair of the Great Lakes Task Force




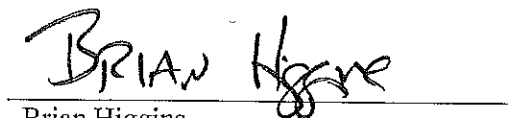
Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

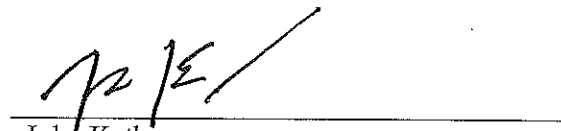

Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

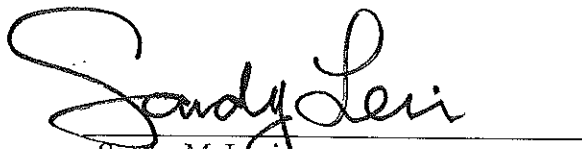

Dan Benishek
Member of Congress

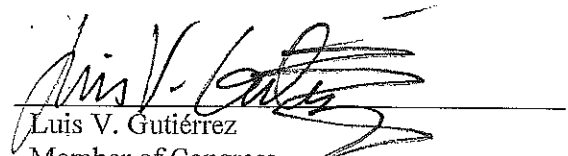

Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

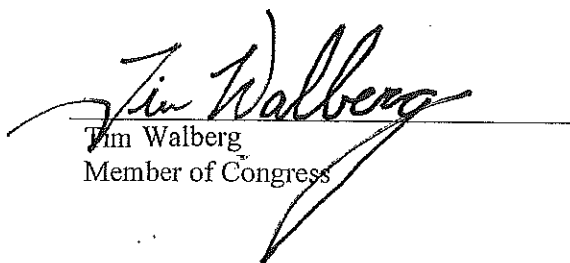

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

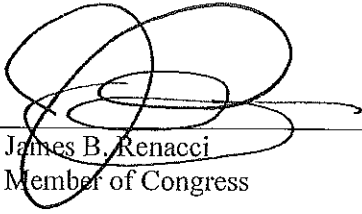

John Katko
Member of Congress


Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress

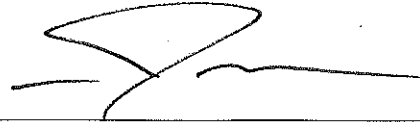

Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress


Tim Walberg
Member of Congress

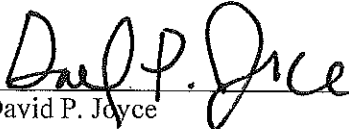

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



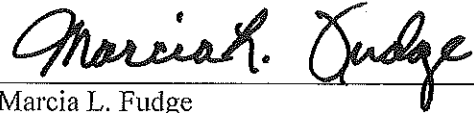
James B. Renacci
Member of Congress



Tom Reed
Member of Congress



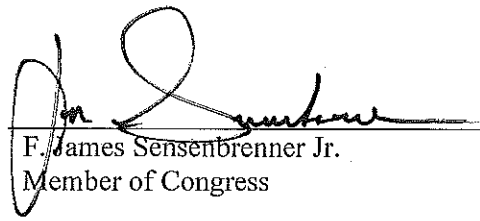
David P. Joyce
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



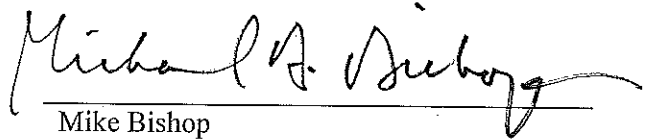
Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



F. James Sensenbrenner Jr.
Member of Congress



Rick Nolan
Member of Congress



Mike Bishop
Member of Congress