

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 12, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
& Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen:

As the Co-Chairs of the Bipartisan Great Lakes Task Force in the House of Representatives, we write to show our support for H.R. 7257, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024, and urge the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to take up consideration of this bipartisan legislation as soon as possible.

The Great Lakes are an irreplaceable resource and an invaluable economic driver to our communities. These waters – Lake Erie, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior – constitute the largest system of surface freshwater on Earth, provide drinking water for an estimated 33 million people, and support 25.8 million jobs generating over \$1.3 trillion in wages.¹ The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has served as a catalyst for unprecedented federal agency coordination on one of the largest freshwater ecosystem restoration projects that directly benefits Great Lakes communities.

Since its inception in 2010, the GLRI has provided over \$3.7 billion to 16 federal organizations to strategically target the biggest threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem, including invasive species, harmful algal blooms, and loss of fish and wildlife.² H.R. 7257 reauthorizes and expands funding for the successful Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through FY2031 to continue this essential work to protect and restore our waters.

Year after year, the GLRI has consistently proven to be an economic and environmental success. With more than 7,500 projects underway or completed, the program has resulted in economic returns of more than 3 to 1 across the region and has made tremendous environmental progress.³ For example, 5 Areas of Concern – geographic areas significantly polluted by human activity –

¹ National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office for Coastal Management, “Great Lakes Fast Facts” (September 5, 2024). <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/great-lakes.html>

² Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, “Action Plan IV Fiscal Years 2025-2029” (April 11, 2024).

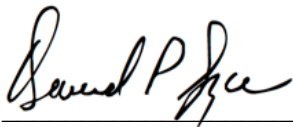
³ Environmental Protection Agency Office of the Inspector General, “Great Lakes Restoration Documented Most Achievements, but the EPA Could Improve Monitoring and Reporting” (June 3, 2024).

have been delisted.⁴ Over 6,700 river miles have been cleared of dams and other barriers, resulting in expanded wildlife habitat and increased biodiversity.⁵ Additionally, nearly 479,000 acres of habitat, including 65,000 acres of coastal wetlands, have been restored to improve ecosystem resilience.⁶

Now and in the future, the federal government must continue to partner with the region to address the remaining challenges facing the Great Lakes. It's imperative to foster a proactive approach to conservation, which provides stability and certainty needed to ensure agencies, local communities, and stakeholders can plan effectively and allocate resources for long-term strategies to benefit the health of the ecosystem. A lapse in consistent authorization would risk reversing years of progress, dramatically reducing GLRI's impact, and jeopardizing the environmental and economic health of the region of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and its federally recognized tribes for generations to come.

The GLRI has long seen strong bipartisan support in Congress and is a proven environmental and economic success. We are pleased to offer our support for this vital legislation and urge the Committee to mark up and favorably report H.R. 7257 for consideration by the full House of Representatives. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

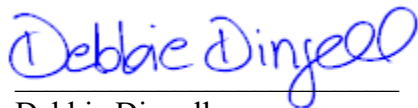
Sincerely,



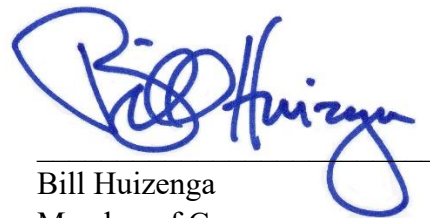
David P. Joyce
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

⁴ Environmental Protection Agency Office of the Inspector General, "Great Lakes Restoration Documented Most Achievements, but the EPA Could Improve Monitoring and Reporting" (June 3, 2024).

⁵ Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, "Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2020-Fiscal Year 2021" (March 2023).

⁶ Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, "Results" <https://www.glri.us/results>