



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST HOUSE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

September 25, 2015

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Donovan:

As members serving on the Great Lakes Task Force and as part of the Great Lakes delegation, we write to call particular attention to the role the Great Lakes plays in our regional and national economies, as well as the lives of millions of people. We urge you to provide sufficient funding for two critical programs for the Great Lakes region – the GLNS and the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration (GLFER) – in the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017) budget request. The GLNS provides the backbone to our nation’s manufacturing, industrial, building, and agricultural economies. Each year, more than 175 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 have resulted in a tremendous backlog of dredging projects that have forced vessels to light load, grounded vessels, impeded safe navigation, closed harbors, and threatened other harbors with closure. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) estimates that the GLNS sediment backlog is more than 18 million cubic yards. This would cost more than \$200 million to remove over a period of several years. The lack of dredging and other required maintenance (including lock repairs and improvements, breakwater repairs, and construction of dredged material disposal facilities) has hindered economic growth.

In order to restore the functionality of the GLNS and make progress in reducing this sediment backlog, we urge the Administration to include \$175 million for the GLNS in its FY2017 budget request. This amount would reduce the GLNS sediment backlog by 10 percent, increase the USACE’s dredged material disposal capacity, quadruple the USACE’s rate of GLNS navigation structure recapitalization, and reduce the risk of an unplanned Soo Lock outage through funding

of its asset renewal plan.

Further, more than 37 million individuals visit the Great Lakes region every year, taking advantage of the many outdoor recreational opportunities the region affords. The USACE plays a significant role in these endeavors through its support of GLFER program, a regional ecosystem restoration program that leverages support for restoration efforts with local partners throughout the Great Lakes region.

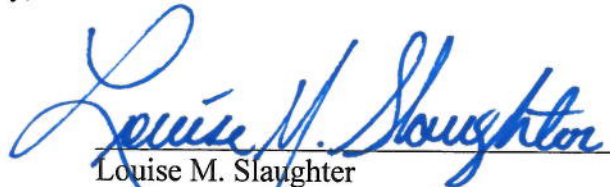
The Administration, despite Congress' encouragement within its annual appropriations bills, has not budgeted for this program since at least FY2010. We request the Administration budget at least \$10 million to support the GLFER program and its abilities to work with local partners to increase the impact of federal restoration dollars. Only through commitments in the base budget will these efforts have the long-term impacts necessary to support the billions of dollars of tourism and recreational opportunities.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters as you review your needs for the FY2017 budget request. If you have questions, please contact Samuel Breene at samuel.breene@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Candice S. Miller
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Great Lakes Task Force



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, Great Lakes Task Force



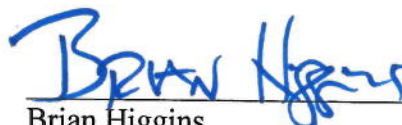
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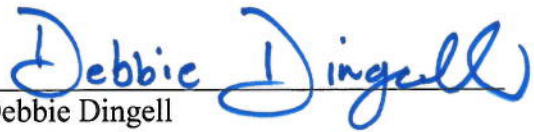
Mike Kelly
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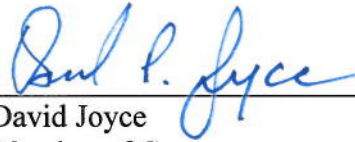
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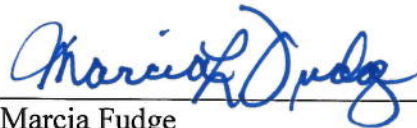
Dan Benishek
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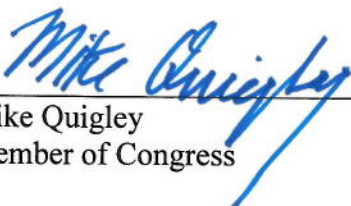
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