

*THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST HOUSE COALITION*

## **GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE**

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

2/8/2017

Dear Mr. President:

We write as members of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force to extend our congratulations to you for being sworn in as our nation's 45th President. We look forward to working with you and your Administration on the issues that are most critical to the health of one of our nation's greatest natural resources—the Great Lakes. With more than 30 million Americans living in the basin, and approximately 85 percent of the country's freshwater contained within them, the Great Lakes serve as an identity to the region. They play a vital role in our region's economic, recreational, and ecological growth. We hope to work with your Administration to implement sound federal policies aimed at best protecting the Great Lakes.

The Congressional Great Lakes Task Force is a bi-partisan, Congressional Members Organization with the mission of advocating for the strongest policies and programs that enhance the Great Lakes. In this capacity, task force members have helped move forward many great victories at the federal level including the recent five-year authorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), continued funding for Great Lakes conservation efforts, and a ban on plastic microbeads in cosmetic products that damage our great bodies of water, to cite a few. We aim to work closely with you to continue these trends of success at the federal level promoting the growth and health of the Great Lakes.

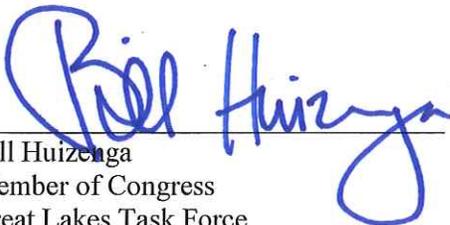
Of significant importance is the continued work of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), the main federal program tasked with forming a public and private partnership to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Since 2010, Congress has provided more than \$2 billion in funding to GLRI to promote the cleanup of toxic hotspots, prevent the spread of invasive species, curb the growth of harmful algal blooms, and promote the overall well-being of the Great Lakes. GLRI has proven to be a tremendous success by bringing together federal and state agencies along with local businesses, industry, conservation leaders, tribes, and local governmental officials. Direct achievements of the GLRI include the restoration of more than 150,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat, the installation of conservation programs on more than one million acres of rural working and farm lands, and the accelerated cleanup of multiple contaminated toxic hotspots. Congress recently reauthorized the GLRI through FY 2021 at \$300 million a year and we look forward to working with your Administration to most effectively administer this essential program.

A major threat to the Great Lakes continues to be the potential introduction of nonnative invasive species, which could severely damage the health of the Great Lakes' \$7 billion annual fishery. In the past, the introduction of foreign species such as zebra and quagga mussels, sea lamprey, round goby, ruffe, and the spiny water flea have had dramatic impacts on the Great Lakes' fish stocks and water quality and have negatively affected local economic and environmental activities. Alone, the introduction of zebra and quagga mussels have increased the cost of the maintenance of water treatment and power generation facilities by blocking intake pipes, reduced the amount of quality food available to Great Lakes sport fish, and accelerated the growth of algal blooms that close beaches and contaminate drinking water. Additionally, new threats continue to emerge including the potential introduction of Asian carp from the Mississippi River basin. Asian carp greatly threaten existing native fish populations while also posing a safety risk to recreational boaters and other users of the Great Lakes. Asian carp are very resilient, can grow as large as 4 feet long and 100 pounds, and eat up to 5-10% of their body weight each day in plankton, which would dramatically alter the marine food chain. The threat of invasive carp spreading into the Great Lakes, especially through the Chicago Area Waterway System, is one of the greatest challenges that the region currently faces. We hope to work with your Administration and stakeholders in the region to find a solution to prevent the transfer of invasive carp into the Great Lakes.

Lastly, we look forward to working with you as your Administration seeks to increase investments to improve and upgrade the nation's infrastructure, especially as it pertains to water infrastructure and freight movement. Serving as an essential mode of transportation for the nation's manufacturing base, the Great Lakes freight industry is key in moving materials such as iron ore and fluxstone for the steel industry, aggregate and cement for the construction industry, coal for power generation, as well as salt, sand and grain. Upgrading key structural points of interest within the Great Lakes navigation system would provide a massive boon to both the Midwest and nation's economy. For instance, according to a new report commissioned by the U.S. Treasury, a \$600 million investment to modernize the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, could provide an economic benefit of more than \$1.7 billion for the region. This, along with other strategic investments to the Great Lakes, is essential in helping restore high paying jobs to our manufacturing sector. We hope to work closely with your Administration to advance maritime commerce solutions that will help restore America's manufacturing base.

The Congressional Great Lakes Task Forces continues to seek out bi-partisan solutions to the issues that are most pressing to our region. We know that there will be many new opportunities in the near future to grow the Great Lakes economy while also restoring and preserving its delicate ecosystem.

Sincerely,



Bill Huizenga  
Member of Congress  
Great Lakes Task Force  
Republican Co-Chair



Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress  
Great Lakes Task Force  
Democratic Co-Chair



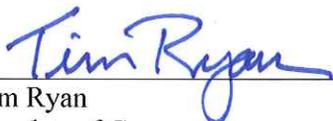
Sean Duffy  
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David P. Joyce  
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Ron Kind  
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Tim Ryan  
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Brian Higgins  
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Mike Quigley  
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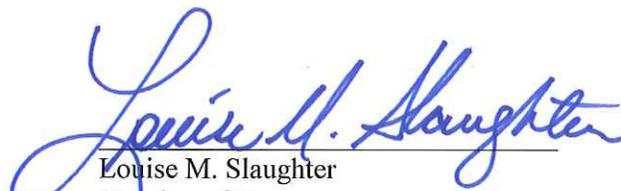
Fred Upton  
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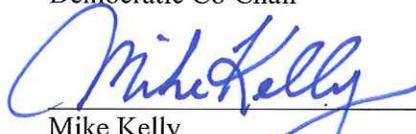
Daniel T. Kildee  
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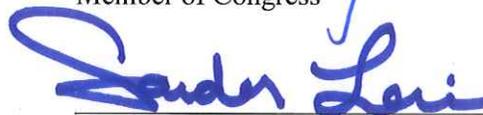
Debbie Dingell  
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Mike Kelly  
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Sander M. Levin  
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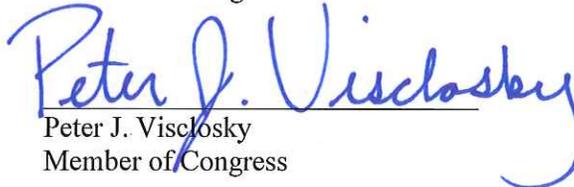
Marcia L. Fudge  
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Peter J. Visclosky  
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Jackie Walorski  
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