



## Senate Vote Paves Way for Great Lakes Restoration, Economic Recovery

**ANN ARBOR, MICH. (September 25)**—The U.S. Senate last night passed an appropriations bill that provides \$400 million for President Obama’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which addresses some of the most urgent threats to the Great Lakes, including invasive species, toxic pollution and habitat restoration.

House and Senate negotiators will decide final funding for the initiative, which the U.S. House of Representatives has already funded at \$475 million.

“Today’s action by the Senate paves the way for Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery,” said **Jeff Skelding, campaign director for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**. “We look forward to working with House and Senate leaders to fully fund this initiative at \$475 million to restore the Great Lakes, jump-start the economy, safeguard public health and uphold our quality of life.”

Passage of the FY10 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 2996) comes days after the Obama White House urged the Senate to fully fund the new Great Lakes initiative. In a Statement of Administration Policy, the Obama Administration wrote: “The Administration appreciates the Committee’s inclusion of \$400 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, but urges the Congress to fully fund the President’s request of \$475 million.”

“Fully funding the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is vital for the millions of people who depend on the Lakes for their jobs and way of life,” said Skelding. “We have solutions to problems such as toxic pollution and invasive species. It is time to use them. The region is ready to get to work restoring this tremendous national resource, before the problems get worse and the solutions get more costly.”

To win full funding during conference negotiations, House and Senate congressional members from Great Lakes states are circulating a sign-on letter, urging key leaders to support full funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

House members who have signed on to the letter include Reps. Vern Ehlers (R-Mich.), Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), John Dingell (D-Mich.), Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.), Sandy Levin (D-Mich.), Brian Higgins (D-N.Y.), Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), Tim Ryan (D-Ohio), Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), Ron Kind (D-Wis.), Chris Lee (R-N.Y.), Steve Kagen (D-Wis.), Gwen Moore (D-Wis.), and Mark Schauer (D-Mich.). Senate signatories include Sens. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), George Voinovich (R-Ohio), and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.).

“The Great Lakes congressional delegation has been instrumental in significantly advancing Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery,” said Skelding. “We’re looking to our Congressional leaders to seal the deal so that we can invest in solutions now that will create jobs in the short term, while paving the way for long-term economic growth and prosperity.”

The Brookings Institution found that the region will gain at least \$2 in economic benefit for every \$1 invested in Great Lakes restoration.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative invests in solutions to stop invasive species that are costing the region at least \$200 million per year in damages and control costs; clean up contaminated sediments that pose a threat to the health of people and wildlife; and restore wetlands and other habitat that protects water quality, prevents flooding and is the foundation of the region’s outdoor economy.

The bill passed in the Senate by a vote of 77-21.

For more information visit: <http://www.healthylakes.org/>

The Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives Campaign is directed by the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. The coalition is co-chaired by the National Wildlife Federation and consists of more than 100 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

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