Great Lakes Protection and Restoration Federal Action Priorities

To ensure a successful transformation of Michigan's economy, a significant investment must be made to improve a watershed that is home to 10 million people. Michigan has already made significant investments to protect, restore, and sustain the Great Lakes and will continue to develop innovative ways to use existing resources and secure new resources to advance Great Lakes protection and restoration efforts. Since 2003, state supported investments of over $1.5 billion in local communities for water and sewer infrastructure have improved water quality and created 17,000 jobs[1]. In addition, Michigan voters have overwhelmingly approved the investment of almost $1.5 billion from two environmental bond initiatives.

However, to meet the future needs of Michigan's and the nation's economy, and as our country increasingly relies on the waters of the Great Lakes, specific actions needing federal assistance can and must be taken. We urge Congress to assist us in addressing the following federal action priorities identified under Michigan's action agenda, the MI-Great Lakes Plan:

- Appropriate $54 million and increase future authorization/funding to $150 million for the Great Lakes Legacy Act to ensure remediation of contaminated sediments in Michigan's Areas of Concern.
- Pass legislation to ensure effective and timely elimination of threats of future aquatic invasive species from ballast water discharges to protect the ecological integrity of the Great Lakes.
- Appropriate $16 million annually to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act to encourage conservation, restoration, and management of fish and wildlife habitat.
- Appropriate $40 million annually for Great Lakes coastal shore and upland habitat conservation programs.
- Reauthorize and fully fund the new Coastal Zone Management Act for Great Lakes and coastal protection and management programs.
- Support passage of the Clean Water Restoration Act legislation and authorize/appropriate funding for state implementation for Section 404 of the Clean Water Act to protect important Great Lakes wetlands.
- Increase appropriations to $3.8 million annually for the BEACH Act to the Great Lakes states to prevent further beach closures and protect human health.
- Restore the historical funding of $1.35 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and fully fund the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund to ensure communities can undertake the necessary upgrades to their water and sewer infrastructure.
- Increase appropriations to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) for the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Program including $82 million to the Great Lakes states for protection of high quality waters and restoration of the hydrologic functions of streams in urban and suburban areas.
- Appropriate $8 million to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers for Great Lakes dredging and infrastructure improvements to commercial and recreational harbors.
- Appropriate $12 million to the USEPA to increase clean sweep collections of cancelled pesticides and legacy mercury and develop programs to reduce uncontrolled burning of household waste.
- Appropriate $7 million to the USEPA for state technical assistance to harness the benefits of green chemistry and increase pollution prevention, energy efficiency, and compliance assistance services.
- Increase appropriations to support research to detect emerging environmental threats, improve restoration methods, and to develop tools for tracking indicators and monitoring restoration effectiveness.
- Support funding of the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control at the current authorized level of $5 million and tie the program to the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy.

1. Economic Impact of Water/Sewer Facilities on Rural and Urban Communities. Rural America. 2002.