

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 26, 2008

The Honorable Kent Conrad  
Chairman  
Senate Budget Committee  
624 Dirksen Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg  
Ranking Member  
Senate Budget Committee  
624 Dirksen Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad and Ranking Member Gregg:

We write to encourage you to place guidance in the Budget Resolution to increase funding to Great Lakes specific programs. The President has proposed cutting funding to the Great Lakes by 16%, and we urge the Budget Committee to reject these imprudent cuts.

The Great Lakes are one of the most significant and imperiled ecosystems in the nation. The Great Lakes make up 90% of the United States surface fresh water and 20% of the world's surface fresh water of which over 35 million people depend on for drinking water. The Great Lakes also have more than 5,000 miles of U.S. shoreline, which is greater than that of either the Eastern or Western seaboard. Unfortunately, the Great Lakes face unique and challenging problems such as toxic sediment remediation, threats from invasive species, non-point source pollution, and habitat loss to name just a few. New factors such as climate change will exacerbate the problems.

Last year's appropriations towards Great Lakes specific programs represent a small, but vital fraction of the estimated \$26 billion needed to remedy the current problems. The President's proposed budget cuts come at the worst possible time as the Great Lakes Regional Collaborative Strategy has recently been approved by local stakeholders—a strategy ordered by the President's own executive order.

The longer we wait to meet the problems facing the Great Lakes, the more expensive and difficult they will be to solve. To meet just small demand of problems identified by the Strategy and challenges, we recommend significant funding increases for all Great Lakes specific programs.

Sincerely,

Rebekah Peterson - George V. Kenovich Norm Fingert

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