

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2014

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0108

Dear Assistant Secretary Darcy:

As Great Lakes Representatives, we write to call particular attention to the Great Lakes Navigation System (GLNS), which is the backbone of our nation's manufacturing, industrial, building, and agricultural economies. Each year, about 145 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 has resulted in a tremendous backlog of dredging projects that have forced vessels to light load, grounded vessels, impeded safe navigation, and closed harbors and threatened other harbors with closure. To further exacerbate the problem, the water levels of a number of the Great Lakes have reached record lows in the last few years. The impacts of the lack of dredging and other required maintenance, including lock improvements, breakwater repairs, and construction of dredged material disposal facilities, have economic consequences that hinder economic growth.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 provided the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) with additional funding above the Administration's request for Civil Works Operations and Maintenance (O&M). Of these additional funds, \$128 million was provided for deep-draft harbor and channel maintenance, \$40 million was provided for small, remote, or subsistence maintenance, \$25.72 million was provided for navigation maintenance, and \$2.2 million was provided for regional sediment management programs. This totals almost \$200 million in additional O&M funding provided by the Congress for navigation-related programs applicable to the GLNS.

We believe that there are many GLNS projects which meet several of the criteria for evaluating projects for allocation of the additional O&M funding, as described in the explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014:

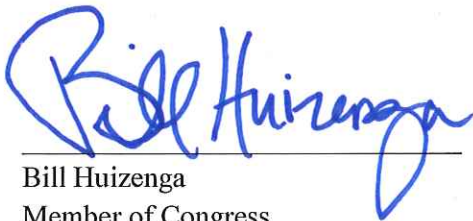
“The Corps...shall consider giving priority to the following: ability to complete ongoing work maintaining authorized depth and width of harbors and shipping channels, including where contaminated sediments are present; ability to address critical maintenance backlog; presence of the U.S. Coast Guard; extent to which work will enhance national, regional, or local economic development, including domestic manufacturing capacity;...for harbor maintenance activities, total tonnage handled, ...energy infrastructure and national security needs served, lack of alternative means of freight movement, and savings over alternative means of freight movement; number of jobs created directly by funded activity; ability to obligate funds allocated within the fiscal year, ability to complete the project, separable element, or project phase within funds allocated; and the risk of imminent failure or closure of the facility.”

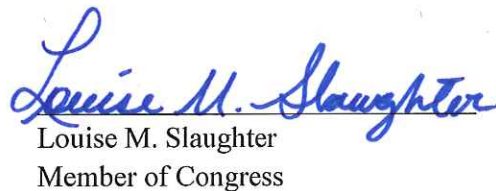
In order to restore the functionality of the GLNS, we urge the Corps to allocate at least \$30 million from the above-described Congressionally-added appropriations to maintain navigational locks, harbor channels and structures, and connecting navigation channels within the GLNS. This request represents only 15% of the additional funding provided for those programs.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to improve the nation’s water resources, including the GLNS.

CC: Lieutenant General Thomas Bostick

Sincerely,


Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

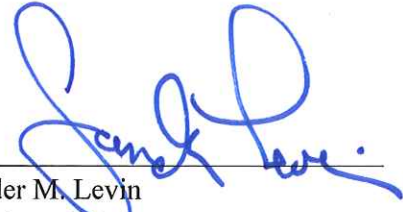

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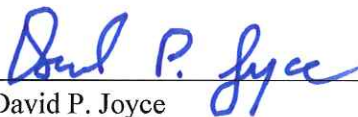
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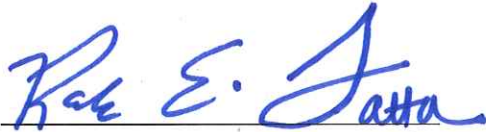
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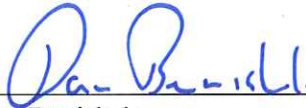
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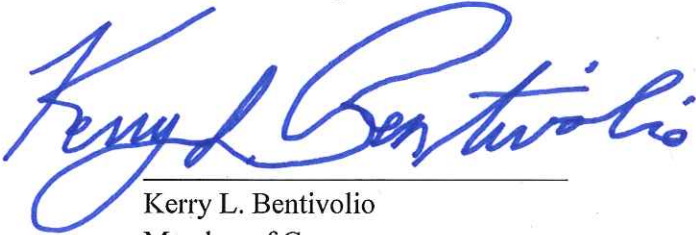
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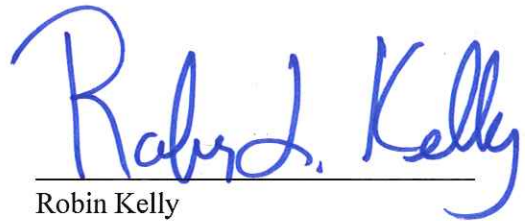
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