

March 29, 2017

Dear Senator / Representative

Address 1

Address 2

City, ST zip

Dear Senator/Representative:

I am writing to ask for your support of the Great Lakes, and Lake Erie in particular. The Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) is a regional council of local governments, businesses, and agencies from Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan who work across political boundaries. TMACOG's water quality initiatives began in 1975, through planning and implementing clean water programs dealing with wide-ranging issues from sewage to no till farming to toxic stream sediments to green infrastructure to wetlands. The role of TMACOG and the communities in our region has grown as citizens have come to understand how necessary their participation is for success.

The federal government has been a leader in restoring the Great Lakes. Despite successes of sewage treatment and agricultural conservation, water quality in Lake Erie began declining in the early 2000s. We all remember well what happened next: toxic algae blooms rendered our public water supply undrinkable for a weekend in the summer of 2014. Moreover, it established the toxic algae microcystin as a foe in which we must be constantly vigilant.

As important as safe drinking water is, a clean Lake Erie brings much more to our region. The water and coastal habitat help make our region a great place to live and an attractive place to visit. Lake Erie is the world's 11th largest lake in surface area, and the economic impact of Lake Erie to the region is significant.

- Lake Erie supports a multi-state and international economy, generating over 100,000 jobs.
- The Port of Toledo is an international cargo hub.
- The eight counties along the Lake Erie shore account for \$13 billion in annual travel and tourism dollars, which represents one-third of Ohio's annual economic productivity in the travel and tourism sector.
- Lake Erie produces more consumable fish than the rest of the Great Lakes combined. As the walleye capital of the world, it hosts a great fishing industry. Ten million pounds of sport fish were harvested from Lake Erie in 2013 on charter and private boats. The American Sport Fishing Association estimates that Lake Erie Sport Fishing alone is a billion dollar industry.

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- Eleven million people get their drinking water from Lake Erie.
- Lake Erie supports a vibrant fishing and boating industry, with 300 marinas in Ohio alone.
- The largest migration habitat area in North America for migratory birds is along the coastal wetlands of the western Lake Erie shores. The Biggest Week in American Birding draws more than 80,000 birders from around the world during the spring migration of Warbler Song Birds and over 100 other species of birds annually. Visitors from 48 states and 22 foreign countries spend more than \$32 million while in this region on their 10-15 day trips.

In 2016, the fully funded Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) was budgeted at \$300 million. Thanks to this funding support, the Great Lakes have a research and implementation network that has become highly skilled in controlling pollution and restoring habitat. GLRI helped us realize that Lake Erie water quality was backsliding and focused us on cutting-edge programs to reduce soluble, reactive phosphorus that drives the toxic algae blooms.

Our region's professional network has been very successful in using GLRI and other funding to employ innovative programs. A few examples:

- The lower Maumee River was declared a "Remedial Action Plan" in part because of PCBs, PAHs, and heavy metals leaching out of wall-to-wall landfills along the shore of the Ottawa River. TMACOG used Great Lakes National Program Office grants to plan the cleanup of river sediments. A coalition of stakeholders used Great Lakes Legacy Act funding to remove 260,000 yd.³ of toxic sediment.
- The City of Toledo used green infrastructure at Cullen Park to control sediment and nutrient runoff from urban land.
- Lake Erie research concludes that agricultural programs must shift from control of particulate to dissolved phosphorus and a new suite of Best Management Practices (BMPs). A three-year GLRI program encourages farmers in the Toussaint and Portage River watersheds to use these cutting-edge technologies. The result will be a big step toward meeting phosphorus reduction targets set by the Collaborative Agreement between the Governors of Ohio and Michigan and the Premier of Ontario.
- The Maumee Bay State Park wetland grew out of a long-term partnership between the City of Oregon, The University of Toledo, TMACOG, and Lucas and Wood county jurisdictions and agencies. The Wolf Creek Committee worked to identify the source of bacteria contaminating Lake Erie beaches. When study results pointed to one particular watershed, Oregon built sanitary sewers that removed over 600 private sewage systems from the watershed. The University of Toledo developed a specialized wetland design to further control bacteria, while promoting nutrient uptake.

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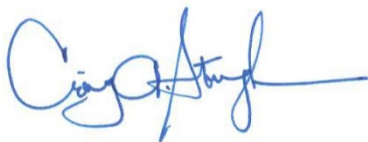
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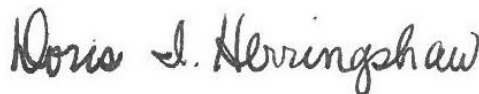
The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has been invaluable to protecting Lake Erie. The program received \$300 million last year, but has been eliminated in the federal budget, which would end the program. The likely result would be to lose the battle of toxic algae in one of our Nation's Great Lakes. Now is not the time to jeopardize past success by cutting the program. Lake Erie is a priceless public resource and deserves protection for present and future generations. For the sake of Lake Erie, and the 11 million people who rely on it for fresh drinking water, The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative needs to be continued.

Thank you for your attention to this discussion. We ask for your support in sustaining the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program. Clean water is not a partisan issue nor is clean water a matter of environment versus economy, because our economy *is* clean water. We invite you to write or call with any questions: please contact Kurt Erichsen, vice president of Water Quality Planning at TMACOG (Kurt@TMACOG.org).

Sincerely;



Craig A. Stough
Chair, TMACOG
Mayor, City of Sylvania, OH



Doris I. Herringshaw
Vice Chair, TMACOG
Commissioner, Wood County, OH



Carol A. Contrada
Chair, TMACOG Water Quality Council
Commissioner, Lucas County, OH



Tim W. Brown
President, TMACOG

CAS:DIH:CAC:TWB:KAE:jam

cc: Cheryl Rice, Urban Resource Conservationist, Lucas County USDA NRCS
Scudder Mackey, Ph.D., Chief, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)
Rodney Stokes, Director, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources & Environment
Craig Butler, Director, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Central District Office
Shannon Nabors, District Chief, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Northwest District Office
Rick Snyder, Governor, State of Michigan

Dear Senator/Representative

John Kasich, Governor, State of Ohio
Scott Zody, Interim Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Clifford Hite, State Senator, 1st District, Ohio
Randal Gardner, State Senator, 2nd District, Ohio
Edna Brown, State Senator, 11th District, Ohio
Mike Shirkey, State Senator, 16th District, Michigan
Dale Zorn, State Senator, 17th District, Michigan
David Burke, State Senator, 26th District, Ohio
James Jordan, U.S. Representative, 4th Congressional District, Ohio
Robert Latta, U.S. Representative, 5th Congressional District, Ohio
Tim Walberg, U.S. Representative, 7th Congressional District, Ohio
Marcy Kaptur, U.S. Representative, 9th Congressional District, Ohio
Gary Peters, U.S. Senator, State of Michigan
Debbie Stabenow, U.S. Senator, State of Michigan
Sherrod Brown, U.S. Senator, State of Ohio
Rob Portman, U.S. Senator, State of Ohio
Theresa Gavarone, U.S. Representative, District 3, Ohio
Michael Ashford, U.S. Representative, District 44, Ohio
Teresa Fedor, U.S. Representative, District 45, Ohio
Michael Sheehy, U.S. Representative, District 46, Ohio
Dekek Merrin, U.S. Representative, District 47, Ohio
Robert McColley, U.S. Representative, District 81, Ohio
Bill Reineke, U.S. Representative, District 81, Ohio
Steven Arndt, U.S. Representative, District 89, Ohio
Joseph Bellino, U.S. Representative, District 17, Michigan
Jason Sheppard, U.S. Representative, District 56, Michigan
Karl Gebhardt, Deputy Director, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Central District Office
Clifford Rosenberger, Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, Statehouse, Columbus, OH
Larry Obhof, President of the Ohio Senate, Statehouse, Columbus, OH