

U.S. Rep. Gallagher: Urges Office of Management & Budget to fund GLRI at \$300 million in FY19

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 1, 2017

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Washington, D.C. – Rep. Mike Gallagher has signed onto a bipartisan letter to the Office of Management and Budget requesting that it includes \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in the President’s Fiscal Year 2019 budget request. The GLRI is an inter-agency program designed to address the most significant problems in the Great Lakes, and works to protect, restore, and maintain the Great Lakes ecosystem.

After signing onto the letter, Rep. Gallagher said:

“Lake Michigan is one of Northeast Wisconsin’s most treasured assets and we must protect it and all of the Great Lakes through maintaining adequate funding for the GLRI and continuing local partnerships, like Save the Bay. We have a moral obligation to pass on clean water to future generations, and protecting our Great Lakes must be at the forefront of this effort.”

Background: The Great Lakes are the source of drinking water for 40 million people and hold 90 percent of our nation’s supply of fresh water. Jobs, recreation and tourism all depend upon a healthy and flourishing Great Lakes ecosystem. In the seven years that the GLRI has been in place, funds have been used to support more than 3,000 restoration projects which address longstanding environmental challenges confronting the Lakes. The projects have focused on improving water quality, protecting native habitat, cleaning up environmentally-impaired areas,

preventing beach closings, and combating invasive species.

Please find the text of the letter below:

Dear Director Mulvaney:

We write to express our strong support for efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes. As you finalize the budget request for Fiscal Year 2019, we respectfully request that you include \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

A true national treasure, the Great Lakes are the largest freshwater system in the world, holding roughly 18 percent of the world's fresh water supply and 90 percent of the United States' fresh water supply. The Lakes are also an economic driver that supports jobs, commerce, agriculture, transportation, and tourism for millions of people across the country. For all these reasons, Great Lakes restoration must remain a priority.

In the seven years that the GLRI has been in place, funds have been used to support more than 3,000 restoration projects which address longstanding environmental challenges confronting the Lakes. The projects have focused on improving water quality, protecting native habitat, cleaning up environmentally-impaired Areas of Concern, preventing beach closings, and combating invasive species.

While the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is showing real and measurable results, there is still a great deal of work to do. Lake Michigan is particularly vulnerable to the Asian carp, an invasive species, that has been migrating north through the Mississippi River. Despite the three electrical barriers that exist along the waterways of south Chicago, a silver carp was found north of the electric barrier this past June – just 9 miles south of Lake Michigan. While the GLRI has prioritized monitoring and intense fishing efforts to ensure the barriers are free of carp, we need additional layers of protection to keep the carp out of Lake Michigan. Considering the clear and present threat posed by Asian carp in the Lakes, as well as other ongoing water quality concerns, now is not the time to reduce funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Recognizing the vital role that the GLRI plays in preserving the health of the lakes and economy of the region, Congress has continually provided robust funding for

the program. Halting this commitment would reverse years of progress, dramatically reduce the GLRI's impact, and jeopardize the environmental and economic health of the region.

In developing the FY 2019 budget request, we urge the Administration to support this important effort.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.