

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins bipartisan colleagues to request \$320 million for Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in President's FY 2021 budget request

Posted on Monday, Jan 27, 2020

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), alongside Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Co-Chairs of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, along with Vice-Chairs Todd Young (R-IN) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and other members of the task force including Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Mike Braun (R-IN), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Gary Peters (D-MI), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Bob Casey (D-PA), today sent a letter urging the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to provide at least \$320 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in the fiscal year (FY) 2021 president's budget request. GLRI is a results-driven program designed to address the most serious issues that threaten the ecological and economic well-being of the Great Lakes basin, including invasive species, pollution, and toxic contamination.

"Now is not the time to scale back our nation's commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy," wrote the Senators. "Because of the partnership we have with federal agencies, our region is making progress and seeing results. The GLRI is a locally driven restoration effort and its success depends on the collaboration between all levels of government and with industrial, commercial, and non-governmental partners. We ask that you provide no less than the FY 2020 appropriated amount of \$320 million for the GLRI in next year's budget

request.”

Full text of the letter can be found below and [here](#). An online version of this release is available [here](#).

Dear Acting Director Vought and Administrator Wheeler:

As you work on the Administration’s fiscal year (FY) 2021 budget, we ask that you include not less than the FY 2020 appropriated amount of \$320 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The Great Lakes are a national treasure and internationally important, providing drinking water for 40 million people and contributing \$10 billion in tourism each year. The momentum and partnerships of the GLRI program, which are helping to protect and restore the lakes, must be maintained.

As you know, our region is successfully undertaking one of the nation’s largest restoration efforts. A recent Great Lakes Restoration Initiative report to Congress found that GLRI “is protecting public health in the Great Lakes more than any other coordinated interagency effort in U.S. history, and helping to ensure that our children and their children live in safer, healthier communities.” Since its inception in 2010, \$2.4 billion has been used to fund over 4,800 projects to combat the greatest threats to the Great Lakes, including invasive species, harmful algal blooms and loss of fish and wildlife habitats.

However, there is still much work that needs to be done. Aging sewers, invasive species, harmful algal blooms, and toxic pollutants are just a few of the pervasive threats that impact the region. Historic high water levels and unprecedented erosion is threatening public safety, shorelines, infrastructure, housing, tourism, and even one of our newest national parks. Cutting funding will slow restoration efforts, allowing problems to get worse and making them more expensive to solve. Ultimately, cutting spending on the Great Lakes won’t save money—it will cost the nation more. As the source of drinking water for 40 million people, the nation cannot afford to stop protecting and restoring the Great Lakes.

Now is not the time to scale back our nation's commitment to restore the Great Lakes environment and economy. Because of the partnership we have with federal agencies, our region is making progress and seeing results. The GLRI is a locally driven restoration effort and its success depends on the collaboration between all levels of government and with industrial, commercial, and non-governmental partners. We therefore ask that you provide no less than the FY 2020 appropriated amount of \$320 million for the GLRI in next year's budget request.

Sincerely,

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