



December 8, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, I write to offer our support for the many provisions in S. 1811, the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, that support restoring and protecting the Great Lakes. Our Coalition appreciates the work of House and Senate Committee leaders in coming to a final agreement. This is an important step in funding and addressing water infrastructure needs across the nation and in the Great Lakes region. We welcome your efforts to complete action on WRDA this year, keeping it on its two-year cycle.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) plays a significant role in helping Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin protect and restore the Great Lakes. Through existing projects like the electric dispersal barrier in the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal that helps prevent aquatic invasive species from entering the Great Lakes to other programs like the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration Program, Army Corps investments are helping our region grow our economy and protect our environment.

S. 1811 includes provisions that continue efforts to address key threats facing Great Lakes waters and communities. The threat of aquatic invasive species looms over the region with the advance of the invasive Asian carp into the basin creating a threat to a \$7 billion fishery. Sec. 401 authorizes the Brandon Road project while Sec. 402 recognizes the importance of the project to the region and nation. Sec. 506 expands the work to slow the spread of Asian carp further throughout the Mississippi river basin to ensure we control and eliminate new pathways into the Great Lakes. Sec. 128 supports further work to detect, prevent, treat, and eliminate harmful algal blooms (a growing threat across the basin) through a demonstration program examining the contributing impact of Corps water resources development projects. Sec. 211 importantly expands the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study, directing the Corps to assess coastline resiliency in a region experiencing significant flooding and erosion from high lake levels. This study, which needs funding, will provide critical guidance on adaptive management of coastal flood risk, ecosystem restoration, and critical infrastructure protection for current and future projects to respond to natural fluctuations exacerbated by climate change.

Importantly, S. 1811 also strengthens the Army Corps work nationwide through the inclusion of provisions that encourage the building of more resilient landscapes through nature-based infrastructure, removing barriers for integrating these features in more projects. Sec. 115 clarifies the cost share for

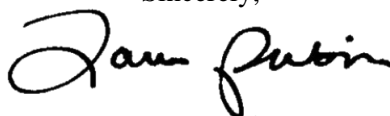
nonstructural or natural and nature-based alternatives for flood risk reduction projects. Sec. 116 requires the Corps to document its consideration of using natural features, while at the same time authorizing it to incorporate, where appropriate, using natural infrastructure when carrying out its continuing and other authorities. Integrating natural features in projects provides environmental and economic benefits to communities reducing operation costs, maintenance requirements, and post-disaster spending.

Moreover, the bill also supports the modernization of Army Corps guidelines and seeks to expand community engagement and support for our most vulnerable communities. Sec. 110 directs the Corps to issue final agency procedures for the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines (PR&G), allowing for the full identification of the national, regional, environmental, and societal benefits of future projects. Sec. 111 provides much needed technical assistance to non-federal partners to enhance resiliency planning, prioritizing assistance to economically disadvantaged communities. Sec. 119 establishes a pilot program to produce 10 feasibility studies at full federal expense for flood risk reduction in economically disadvantaged and rural communities, providing critical support to communities facing flooding events and in need of a solution but without the resources to meet the required non-federal cost-share.

While we appreciate the bill's focus on important Army Corps provisions, we are disappointed the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Act was left out of the final package. The GLRI is cleaning up toxic hot spots, improving water quality, and addressing emerging contaminants to the benefit of public health and the local economy with economic returns of more than 3 to 1. Much work remains, making it important to remove any uncertainty for the complex long-term projects critical to the remediation of toxic hotspots and the restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem. We urge Congress to enact the full five-year reauthorization some other way, as proposed by S. 2295, passed by the House under H.R. 4031 and H.R. 2, and included in the original Senate WRDA proposal S. 3591—authorizing the GLRI through FY2026 with incremental increases to its original funding level of \$475 million.

Thank you again for your hard work in coming to a final agreement and moving forward the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act of 2020. The provisions highlighted above will benefit the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes—and the communities which rely on the lakes for their drinking water, health, jobs, and quality of life. Please do not hesitate to contact Chad Lord, our coalition's policy director, if you have any questions. He can be reached at (202) 454-3385 or clord@npca.org. We look forward to working with you as you advance this bill in the closing stages of the 116th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Rubin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Rubin".

Laura Rubin
Coalition Director

Cc: The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable John Barrasso, Chair, Committee on Environment and Public Works
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Tom Carper, Ranking member, Committee on Environment and Public Works