



Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

May 21, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Cardin
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso, Subcommittee Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Carper, and Ranking Member Cardin:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition and our over 150-member organizations, we thank you for introducing S. 2800, the bi-partisan America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. We appreciate the support this committee has shown for restoring and protecting the Great Lakes and are grateful to see the Great Lakes provisions in this bill. We also appreciate the committee's attempt to stay on a regular cycle for addressing our nation's water infrastructure needs.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition represents more than 150 non-governmental organizations in all eight Great Lakes states. We consist of environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, community groups, zoos, aquariums and museums. Our groups represent millions of people whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

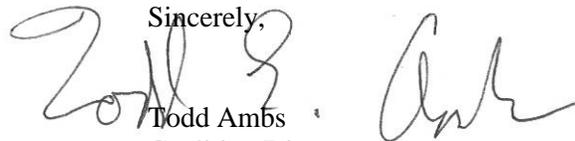
S. 2800 includes provisions that will benefit the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes—and the communities which rely on the lakes for their drinking water, health, jobs, and quality of life. Sec. 3604 increases the resources available to the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, which helps protect and restore the region's wildlife habitat. Sec. 3605 acknowledges that while the region is making great progress under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the lakes still face serious threats, which can be addressed by the increased funding provided in this section. Sec. 3606 authorizes the important Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency study to coordinate and recommend actions to manage and protect the Great Lakes coastline from changes in lake levels, erosion, flooding, agricultural and urban runoff, and aging infrastructure. Lastly, Sec. 2306 keeps attention on the Army Corps to ensure it completes the Brandon Road study and provides the region with the feasibility study it needs to move it towards constructing additional structural measures that keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes.

The bill also focuses much-needed attention on the enormous backlog of work fixing our region's old, outdated wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater infrastructure. The Great Lakes provide drinking water for more than 30 million people in the United States. They are the foundation of our economy and our way of life. Repairing old infrastructure is a large undertaking — and expensive. A recent survey of needed infrastructure investments across the nation shows that the Great Lakes region alone requires \$179 billion over the next 20 years to repair and replace our wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. Paying for these projects often falls on communities that cannot afford it, underscoring the importance of financial support from the federal government.

S. 2800 includes provisions that address many of the problems facing Great Lakes communities. Sec. 5004 provides important technical assistance to small, medium-sized and rural communities helping them get ready for system improvements. Sec. 5005 sets aside funds to implement source water protection plans and authorizes funds for sewer overflow control grants, including stormwater management activities. Sec. 5006 applies integrated management principles for wastewater and stormwater. It also encourages nature-based infrastructure and requires new affordability criteria for determining the ability of households to pay their utility bills. Sec. 5010 focuses needed attention on investing in local workers and local small businesses to strengthen communities and build strong career pipelines for skilled and diverse workers. Lastly, Sec. 5011 states clearly that the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds should receive robust funding.

Thank you again for introducing the bi-partisan America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. 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 the bill moves forward.

Sincerely,



Todd Ambs
Coalition Director