



For Immediate Release
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Ohio's U.S. Senators, Representative Help Secure \$475 Million to Advance Great Lakes Restoration

Columbus, OH — President Obama is poised to sign into law a bill that will nearly double funding to restore Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes, following a vote by the U.S. Congress today.

“Today’s action is a gigantic step forward in the effort to restore Lake Erie and revive the state’s economy,” said Rick Graham, President of the Izaak Walton League Ohio Division. “We applaud Ohio’s congressional delegation for the key roles that they played to ensure the passage of this legislation. We look forward to President Obama signing this into law so that we can get to work protecting our drinking water, economy and way of life.”

Senators Brown and Voinovich, and Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Ryan, Sutton, and Wilson were especially helpful in getting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative fully funded at \$475 million. President Obama proposed the Initiative in his inaugural budget in the spring.

“We couldn’t be more proud of our Ohio Lake Erie Congressional delegation’s involvement,” said Eric Uhde, Grassroots Coordinator for Audubon Ohio. “This is a win for the environment and a win for the economy. A healthy Lake Erie will benefit the people, businesses, and communities of Ohio.”

As part of the Interior and Environment Appropriations Act of 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will fund projects like:

- Habitat restoration of the Ashtabula River to complete the river’s clean up;
- Removal of the Ballville Dam in Freemont, Ohio, to restore natural flow to the Sandusky River and improve fish spawning habitat for Lake Erie;
- Stemming the tide of nutrients flowing into the western Lake Erie basin to reduce the harmful algal blooms and beach advisories; and
- Slamming the door on further introductions of aquatic invasive species. Earlier this year the USEPA stated the ports of highest risk for future introductions included Ashtabula, Sandusky, and Toledo.

“The need is great and we’re ready to get to work now,” said Sandy Bihn, President, Western Lake Erie WATERKEEPER Association. “Restoring Lake Erie - the warmest,

shallowest, ‘fishiest’ of the Great Lakes - and the other Great Lakes will not happen overnight. The western Lake Erie basin is once again green, threatening water quality and fisheries akin to the 1960’s and 1970’s. The need is urgent this investment is a great start—one that we hope will serve as the foundation for a long-term commitment to protect and restore Lake Erie all the Great Lakes, the economy, and our way of life.”

At the state level, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission has been working behind the scenes, pulling together state agencies and organizations that they have a contract with in order to develop a list of priority projects to submit for this future funding. This list should be available next week. There will be time for the public to provide comments on the draft proposed project list. There will not, however, be an opportunity for the public to help enhance those projects.

“It is now time for the state of Ohio to step up to the plate and engage all stakeholders in the process of putting together comprehensive project proposals,” said Kristy Meyer, Director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs for the Ohio Environmental Council. “Comprehensive projects could increase the likelihood of the project obtaining funding, provide more benefits for the Ohio Lake Erie basin and its communities, and provide an opportunity for smaller groups to participate in restoring and protecting Ohio’s Lake Erie basin.”

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