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FUND GREAT LAKES RESTORATION, ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Congressional, Local, Business, Environmental Leaders Urge Support for New \$475 Million Clean-Up Effort

Columbus, OH – As Congress prepares to vote on legislation that could provide up to \$475 million in funding for Great Lakes restoration, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown and Brookings Institution economist John Austin joined Cleveland business and environmental leaders today to outline how funding Great Lakes restoration will promote economic recovery and development.

“Investing in the Great Lakes region is an important way to promote economic development,” U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown said. “Restoration efforts will create jobs and ensure the long-term economic competitiveness of Northern Ohio.”

The Brookings Institution estimates that the Great Lakes region would see at least a \$2 economic benefit for every \$1 investment in the restoration of the Lakes. Cleveland alone could see economic gains of \$2.1 million - \$3.7 million. To access the *Healthy Waters, Strong Economy* and *Place Specific Benefits of Great Lakes Restoration* reports visit: <http://www.theoec.org/newsroom.htm>.

“Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery go hand-in-hand,” said Kristy Meyer, Director of Agricultural & Clean Water Programs for the Ohio Environmental Council. “Our message to Congress is clear: Stand up for the millions of people who depend on the Great Lakes for their jobs, drinking water, public health, and way of life by fully funding the \$475 million Great Lakes restoration initiative. Delay or inaction will only make the problems worse and the solutions more costly.”

Great Lakes restoration has gained momentum in Congress and the White House recently with the inclusion of a \$475 million Great Lakes restoration initiative proposed in President Obama’s FY2010 Budget. Those monies have been appropriated by Congressional committees and now must be approved by the Senate and joint conference committee to find their way to restoration programs in Cleveland and throughout the Great Lakes.

“Great Lakes restoration is good for the economy and is a jobs-creator,” said Carol Caruso, Senior Vice-President of Advocacy for Greater Cleveland Partnership. “We are counting on Ohio’s Congressional delegation to act on the momentum in the White House and Congress and support the \$475 million appropriation for Great Lakes restoration and economic recovery.”

The \$475 million Great Lakes restoration initiative invests in priorities such as clean-up of toxic pollution and restoration of wildlife habitat that track closely with a comprehensive strategy that has won the endorsement of the eight-state region’s mayors, governors, businesses, industry and environmental leaders—in part because of the growing awareness of the economic benefit of restoring the Lakes.

“Great Lakes restoration is a good investment for the economy and the environment,” said John Austin, Senior Fellow for the Brookings Institution. “We can restore the lakes and boost the economy of the region by fully funding solutions that tackle the most pressing problems to the Great Lakes and the businesses and communities which depend on them.”

Source of more than 90 percent of the nation’s surface fresh water, the Great Lakes are seriously threatened by problems such as sewage contamination, invasive species, toxic pollution and the loss of wetlands and other habitat. When the Lakes are unhealthy, it is a drain on the economy and it means fewer jobs for the region. Just as disturbing, unhealthy Lakes mean fewer people can enjoy beaches, fishing, waterways, and clean drinking water.

“Congressional action to fully fund the \$475 million Great Lakes restoration initiative will be a huge step forward in the effort to restore the nation’s largest supply of surface fresh water,” said Meyer. “Restoring the Great Lakes is the right thing to do for the environment and the economy.”

The call for Congressional action comes on the heels of EPA public comment sessions around the Great Lakes region. The agency is gathering feedback from the public on how future Great Lakes restoration funds should be spent.

For more information: <http://www.healthylakes.org/>

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio's leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio's families and communities. For more information, visit www.theOEC.org.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 100 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.