



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

May 24, 2010

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Committee on Environment & Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment & Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:

As members representing the Great Lakes region, we appreciate your consideration of the following requests for inclusion in the next Water Resources Development Act.

We urge that the Committee authorize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to implement measures recommended in the Efficacy Study, authorized under section 3061 of WRDA 2007, authorize a study to separate watersheds, authorize measures to prevent the movement of aquatic nuisance species, purchase real estate, and provide improvements to making Barrier I a permanent barrier.

In an effort to slow or stop the spread of invasive species between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River watersheds--connected as a result of a project in the early 1900s which the Corps now operates--Congress authorized a dispersal barrier demonstration project in the National Invasive Species Act of 1996. The barrier has been operating successfully, and a second, permanent barrier is partially constructed. While the operation of the dispersal barrier system is a strong measure to guard against species moving between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, we believe that additional options are needed. We need to ensure that the Corps of Engineers has sufficient authorization to improve the existing barrier system and to prevent aquatic nuisance species from bypassing the barrier.

First, we urge you to require the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a study of hydrological separation options on the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal (CSSC) to prevent invasive species, especially Asian carp, from migrating through this corridor. We define hydrological separation as a physical separation on the CSSC that would disconnect the Mississippi River from Lake Michigan. This separation should be adequate in scope to prevent the transfer of aquatic species between these water basins. The study should include options to address flooding, Chicago wastewater, waterway safety operations and barge and recreational vessel traffic alternatives. This should include, but not be limited to: (1) examining other modes of transportation for cargo and CSSC users, and (2) creating engineering designs to move canal traffic from one water body to the other without transferring aquatic species. The study should detail the environmental benefits and costs of each option. It is expected that such a study would

be conducted in association with the Great Lakes Interbasin Study, authorized under Section 3061 (d).

Second, we encourage you to authorize the preventative measures identified by the Corps as recommended in the final Efficacy Study, authorized under Section 3061(b)(1)(D) of WRDA 2007. This Study has been divided into four focus areas. The Corps is proceeding with Interim Reports for each. The Energy & Water Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2010 authorized the Corps, for one year, to implement the recommendations of the Efficacy Study or Interim Reports. Authorizing the measures identified by the Corps will allow for funding consideration while maintaining appropriate Congressional oversight of the Corps budget and workplans.

Finally, the Corps needs a minor amendment to the WRDA 2007 language so that it can purchase real estate for the barrier system and upgrade and make permanent Barrier I of the Electrical Disbursal Barrier System in a location and with the features and operations determined to be the most effective.

We certify that neither we nor our immediate families have a pecuniary interest in any of the congressionally directed spending item(s) that we have requested, consistent with the requirement of paragraph 9 of Rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate. We further certify that we have posted a description of the items requested on our official websites, along with the accompanying justification.

We urge the Committee to give full consideration to our requests, and again thank you for your continued support for the Great Lakes. If your staff has any questions, they may direct their inquiries to Joy Mulinex, Director of the Great Lakes Task Force at 4-1211.

Sincerely,



George V. Voinovich
United States Senator



Carl Levin
United States Senator



Richard Durbin
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Robert Casey, Jr
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Charles Schumer
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Herb Kohl
United States Senator



Arlen Specter
United States Senator



Roland Burris
United States Senator