Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to express our strong and unified support for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Geographic Programs, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Puget Sound, Chesapeake Bay Program, Long Island Sound, Gulf of Mexico, and others.

The lakes, estuaries, and shorelines protected by these programs are truly national treasures. The Great Lakes are the largest freshwater system in the world, holding roughly 18 percent of the world's fresh water supply and 90 percent of the United States' fresh water supply. The Puget Sound and the Chesapeake Bay watersheds are the Nation's two largest estuaries, encompassing more than 48 million acres of rivers, bays, beaches and shorelines that support some of the Nation's most valuable fisheries.

These iconic bodies of water are also crucial economic drivers that support millions of jobs and billions of dollars in economic impact across the country. In Washington State, the marine industry – which includes fishing fleets, ports, and seafood processors – generates $30 billion annually, and is directly tied to the health of the Puget Sound. Likewise, more than 1.5 million jobs and $62 billion in wages are directly tied to the Great Lakes.

Collectively, the EPA's Geographic Program funds have been used by state, local, and tribal governments to implement thousands of on-the-ground projects to improve water quality, protect and restore native habitats, enhance fish and shellfish populations, and combat invasive species. Although every region has shown significant improvement as the result of these investments, there is still a great deal of work to do.

For example, in 2014 a toxic algal bloom in Lake Erie forced 400,000 residents in the Toledo area to go without home water service for three days. Similarly, in 2015 the Puget Sound experienced the largest toxic algae bloom ever recorded off the West Coast which closed shellfish and crab fisheries throughout the region. Likewise, the annual "dead zone" in the Chesapeake Bay, the result of algal blooms feeding off nutrient pollution, causes significant stress to the Bay's ecosystem and strains the populations of commercial species such as the iconic blue crab.

The economic impacts from these algal blooms reverberate throughout these regions. Grants from the EPA's geographic programs have been critical to funding research and monitoring efforts to improve

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

predictions of these blooms, but it is clear that much more work remains in order to protect the health of our citizens and our local economies.

Similarly, in South Florida, the EPA's geographic program funds have been critical to supporting efforts to monitor and reduce the impact of point- and nonpoint-source pollution on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. These efforts are key to protecting indigenous populations of corals, shellfish, fish and wildlife, and recreational activities which are all critical economic drivers for the region.

We know that you are strongly in favor of growing the economy, protecting clean water, and creating jobs. The federal funding provided through the Geographic Programs does just that. A peer-reviewed study of the Chesapeake cleanup plan demonstrated that the Chesapeake provides benefits of more than $107 billion annually to the region, which will grow by more than $22 billion annually once the cleanup plan is complete. Likewise, the GLRI has accomplished four times more clean-up and restoration work in the last six years than was undertaken over the previous 22 years. This progress has helped rejuvenate the hunting, fishing, and birding opportunities which support 217,000 tourism and recreation jobs throughout the region. Furthermore, in Washington State alone, every EPA dollar spent on Puget Sound recovery efforts has leveraged more than $24 in matching funds from other federal agencies and local partners, including the state, tribes, and non-profits. That's an enormous return on investment.

Given the sweeping economic impacts of the Geographic Programs, we ask that you continue to include robust support for these programs in your Fiscal Year 2018 budget request and beyond. The health of our communities and the strength of our economies depend on it.

Sincerely,

Dave Reichert
Member of Congress

David P. Joyce
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

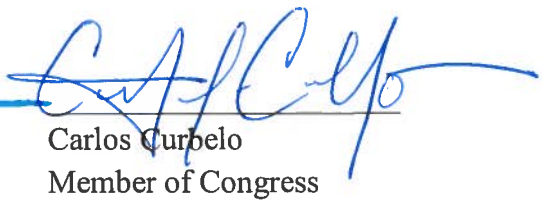
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



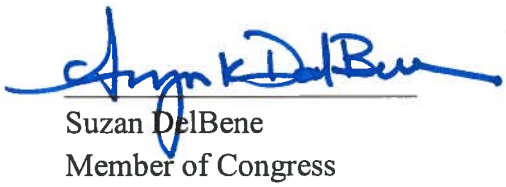
Denny Heck
Member of Congress



John Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress



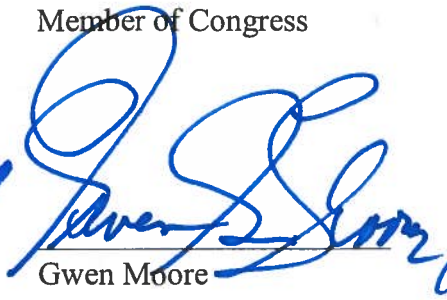
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



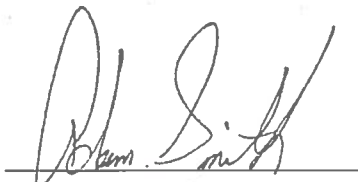
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Richard M. Nolan
Member of Congress



John Moolenaar
Member of Congress



John K. Delaney
Member of Congress



Fred Upton
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

John Katko
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress