

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2017

The Honorable Scott Walker
Governor of Wisconsin
115 East Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker:

I write regarding President Trump's proposed budget and his plan to eliminate federal investments for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and instead rely on the State of Wisconsin and local governments in our state to provide this critical funding.

Last year, you wrote to President Trump expressing your view that the role of the federal government should be reduced and states should have more power and control over programs and policies. President Trump's budget request would do just that with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, transferring the responsibility to fund this vital investment to you and local governments. Wisconsin has received millions in federal investments from this federal program and local governments simply do not have the resources to replace this funding. I am writing to ask: What is your plan to provide the funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative that President Trump's budget would eliminate?

Since its inception in 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has leveraged \$1.6 billion to fund over 3,000 projects to improve water quality, protect and restore native habitats and species, and address other environmental problems in the Great Lakes basin. Of this, Wisconsin has seen \$331 million in federal investments for 416 projects. With our natural resources supporting over \$5 billion of activity in Wisconsin's economy alone, preserving the Great Lakes is not just an environmental goal, it is an economic necessity. The GLRI investment is expected to produce nearly \$12 billion in benefits from tourism, fishing, and recreation basin wide. Restoration is also critical to the economic future of our small towns and cities alike. Restoring the Great Lakes is expected to yield an increase of up to \$19 billion in property values, including an increase of up to \$2.3 billion in the Milwaukee metro area alone. It is also expected to reduce costs to local government by up to \$125 million dollars, yet President Trump's budget would pass on increased costs to the State and local governments.

The GLRI has helped our state combat the growth of invasive species like Asian carp and zebra mussels, which pose a major threat to the ecology and economy of the Great Lakes by devastating the food chain and causing major damage to our ports, pipes and water infrastructure. It has also helped our state clean up polluted sites and restore water quality in Wisconsin. It has received bipartisan support in Congress and as a member of the Senate Great Lakes Task Force, I sent a letter with a bipartisan group of Senators requesting that President Trump include funding for the program in his budget request. Instead, the President decided to eliminate federal funding for the program and, as he stated in his request, the budget returns the responsibility for funding local environmental efforts and programs to State and local entities.

Given that President Trump's budget would transfer the responsibility to invest in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to you, the people of Wisconsin deserve to know if you accept this responsibility. It's also important that the people we work for know how you plan to meet this new challenge of funding a critical program for our region, the health of our communities, and the protection of our clean water resources.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator