



April 6, 2009

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

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CHAIR
Governor of Wisconsin

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Governor of Indiana

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Dear Secretary Locke:

As you know, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Congress entrusted the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with distributing up to \$170 million nationally for habitat restoration in coastal areas including the Great Lakes. Toward this end, NOAA recently requested proposals for Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project grants. The Great Lakes Governors strongly encourage you and the NOAA leadership to allocate as much funding as possible toward grants in the Great Lakes States.

In our States, habitat restoration is both an environmental and economic imperative that has been central to the Governors' shared efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Basin includes parts of eight States, more than 10,000 miles of coastline, over 500,000 acres of coastal wetlands, the world's largest system of freshwater dunes and more than 30,000 islands. Currently, 46 Basin species of plants and animals are found nowhere else on earth and nearly 300 Basin species and habitat types are globally rare. Our world-class environmental resources are an asset that drives our regional and national economy. Current estimates indicate that in the Great Lakes region boating, fishing, hunting and wildlife watching generate over \$50 billion of economic activity annually and generate hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Habitat restorations in our shared Great Lakes Basin do not simply affect the specific restoration site. Habitat improvements yield benefits for the entire ecosystem, our economy and our citizens across the eight Great Lakes States and beyond. As a result, each of the Great Lakes States is already committing significant monies toward habitat restoration. But despite our State commitments and those from our federal, local, Tribal and non-governmental partners, there is a large unmet need for additional funding. The 2005 Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, which was developed by Administration officials, Governors, Mayors, Tribal leaders and other partners, called for overall habitat conservation and related species management funding to be increased by \$288 million per year for the Great Lakes Basin.

While we continue to work to secure needed funding of this magnitude, in the near term the NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project grants

could jumpstart our collective habitat restoration efforts and our economy. The Great Lakes States are uniquely positioned to realize these complementary objectives.

Each of our States is already investing significantly in habitat restoration and has many “shovel-ready” projects that have already been completed or are near completing the planning process. In my State of Wisconsin, we anticipate applying for more than \$30 million in NOAA project grants, applications in Michigan are likely to exceed \$75 million, about \$10 million from Illinois and, of course, the other Great Lakes States will be similarly pursuing the grant funding. Clearly, there is a tremendous need for federal habitat restoration funding. As a result of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration our region has a plan with discrete habitat objectives to integrate our collective efforts and meet broader environmental and economic goals. And through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Great Lakes Habitat Initiative, our region has a forum for collaboration, a program and project database to link our specific efforts, and a framework for continued action.

The Great Lakes Governors greatly appreciate your consideration of our proposals for NOAA Coastal and Marine Habitat Restoration Project grants. We encourage you to allocate as much funding as possible toward grants in the Great Lakes States. Should you or your staff have questions, please contact me directly, or David Naftzger, Executive Director of the Council of Great Lakes Governors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Doyle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Doyle".

Jim Doyle
Governor, State of Wisconsin
Chair, Council of Great Lakes Governors