THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST SENATE COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

January 30, 2015

The Honorable Jo-Ellen Darcy
Assistant Secretary of the Army
Department of the Army, Civil Works
108 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Lieutenant General Thomas Bostick
Chief of Engineers
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Secretary Darcy and LTG Bostick:

The Great Lakes provide an essential transportation network for the movement of products, such as road salt, iron and steel products, coal, and agricultural commodities for domestic and international consumption. Utilizing the Great Lakes navigation system is often the least expensive option to ship these goods that are necessary to build our roads, power our homes, enable manufacturing, and feed our families. However, the Great Lakes infrastructure lacks adequate maintenance and the efficiency of the system is threatened by a growing backlog of dredging needs, aging locks, and deteriorating breakwaters, piers, and jetties. We need to modernize and rebuild this infrastructure in order to realize the full economic potential the Great Lakes provide.

On December 13, 2014, Congress approved an appropriations measure for fiscal year 2015 (FY2015) that provided funding to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) for a variety of water resource projects, including Great Lakes navigation. In addition to allocating funds for specific projects, Congress also provided additional guidance and funding for the Corps to distribute to navigation projects across the country. As it was explained in the accompanying joint statement, Congress provided this additional funding because "Federal navigation channels maintained at only a fraction of authorized dimensions . . . results in economic inefficiencies and risks infrastructure failure, which can cause substantial economic losses. Investing in operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of infrastructure today will save taxpayers money in the future." Of this additional funding provided by Congress, Great Lakes navigation projects are eligible for approximately $255 million, which includes additional support for navigation maintenance; small, remote or subsistence navigation; deep- and shallow- draft harbors and channels; and regional sediment management.

While we appreciate the additional support you provided to Great Lakes navigation maintenance in FY2014, a backlog of unmet navigation system maintenance remains across the Great Lakes. Therefore, we urge the Corps to direct the needed resources for Great Lakes navigation projects in FY2015. This additional support is sorely needed to address the lack of maintenance of our locks, breakwaters, and dredging needs, which continues to force vessels to light-load, grounds vessels, impedes safe navigation, and closes harbors.

As you work to direct the FY2015 funds continues, we urge you to recognize the importance of investing in the Great Lakes navigation system and the critical impact it has on our economy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Kirk, Co-Chair
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow, Co-Chair
United States Senator

Rob Portman
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Ron Johnson
United States Senator