

President Signs Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act

Funding Doubles to \$80 Million Over 5 Years

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 13)- Progress toward comprehensive restoration of the Great Lakes accelerated when President Bush signed into law a measure that will double funding to rehabilitate fish and wildlife habitat in the lakes.

The signing of Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Act, which increases funding for fish and wildlife protection from \$8 million to \$16 million per year, will preserve and enhance some of the Midwest's premiere recreational destinations for outdoor enthusiasts.

"This is a victory for our Great Lakes, and the people who enjoy its beaches, world-class fishing streams, and national parklands," said Tom Kiernan, president of the National Parks Conservation Association and co-chairman of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. "The White House and a bipartisan group of congressional leaders deserve credit for together advancing manageable solutions to the urgent problems facing our Great Lakes."

The bill also represents a victory in the continuing quest for a broader restoration of the Great Lakes, a strategy that was released last year as part of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration. Reauthorization of the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Act was a goal adopted in that plan.

"Today's action comes at the right time," said Andy Buchsbaum, director of the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes office and co-chair of the Healing Our Waters coalition. "The health of the Great Lakes has been compromised by raw sewage contamination and other threats to our drinking water, our beaches and our wildlife. We can't afford to risk the future of these places we cherish. Every day we wait the problems get worse and the solutions more costly."

This bill provides a new authority for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to take on regional projects based on recommendation by states and tribes for the regional benefit of fish and wildlife.

"Anyone who has ever enjoyed fishing on the Great Lakes, a walk along the dunes or simply a moment of peace and quiet in a state park will benefit from this bill," said Emily Green, director of the Great Lakes program for the Sierra Club and co-chair of the Healing Our Waters coalition. "The Great Lakes are a part of our heritage and our family traditions, and without healthy lakes, we won't have healthy lives."

The Healing Our Waters®-Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 85 state, regional and national zoos, museums, aquariums, hunter, angler, and conservation organizations. Headed by the National Wildlife Federation and the National Parks Conservation Association, the coalition is seeking state and federal support to restore the Great Lakes.

For more information, visit: <http://www.restorethelakes.org>

Immediate Release: October 13, 2006

Contact:

Jordan Lubetkin, National Wildlife Federation, (734) 769-3351, x 23; lubetkin@nwf.org
Andrea Keller, National Parks Conservation Association, (202) 454-3332; akeller@npca.org
Emily Green, Sierra Club, (608) 695-4994; emily.green@sierraclub.org
Nora Ferrel, Valerie Denney Communications, (312) 408-2580; nora@vdc.com