

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

We write to sound the alarm on the Trump Administration's actions to undo important progress on the Great Lakes. Refusal to act will jeopardize the health and vitality of the Great Lakes as well as the economies of communities on their shores.

The Great Lakes contain 84% of North America's fresh water, see 200 million tons of cargo per year, and are home to over 30 million people in their basin. Efforts like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement have made significant strides to revitalize the Great Lakes, reverse decades of industrial pollution, and create action plans to continue to on this course. However, the Trump Administration's rollbacks to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules, efforts to dismantle the Clean Water Act, and consistent attacks on the environment present an imminent threat that requires Congressional attention.

While the nearly fifty EPA rules and regulations that have been repealed or weakened during the Trump Administration are of great concern, four in particular could have significant impacts on the Great Lakes:

- **2020 Steam Electric Reconsideration Rule:** In 2015 the EPA established limitations on toxic metals from power plants. The 2020 rule creates exemptions for these facilities which may lead to industrial pollution.
- **Navigable Waters Protection Rule:** This EPA and U.S. Department of the Army rule restricts the definition of "Waters of the United States" by rolling back Clean Water Act protections on wetlands and streams.
- **Section 401:** Any applicant for a federal license or permit to conduct activity that may result with discharge into water covered under the definition of "Waters of the United States" is required to provide the licensing agency, generally the state, with a Section 401 certification, to confirm compliance with water quality standards. The 2020 rule limits the application of this rule to point-source pollution, whereas previously non-point source discharge could be considered, and narrows the authority of states.
- **Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science:** This rule, currently in the final stages of the rulemaking process, would allow the EPA to give studies that are not "independently verified" lower priority than those that are, undermining rigorous peer-review processes and the many studies that use confidential data, for example, those related to human health impacts of pollution.

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This list, while not comprehensive, illustrates the severe danger to the Great Lakes ecosystem and water quality as a result of the Trump Administration's actions. Absent a Congressional strategy to fight these harmful rollbacks, the responsibility falls to state governments and attorneys general. It is our responsibility as federal elected officials to stop the deterioration of the EPA, ensure the advancements made in Great Lakes water quality remain, and build upon this foundation for future progress. The Great Lakes face a new generation of threats, such as non-point source pollution, that must be prioritized, instead of allowing the state of the Great Lakes to decline once again. Along with us, we urge you to corral the resources of the Congress to prevent further degradation of our region and renew our nation's efforts to ensure access to clean water for our children's future.

Thank you for your attention to this most important matter. We look forward to working with you to protect and revitalize the Great Lakes.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress



Ron Kind
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Andy Levin
Member of Congress