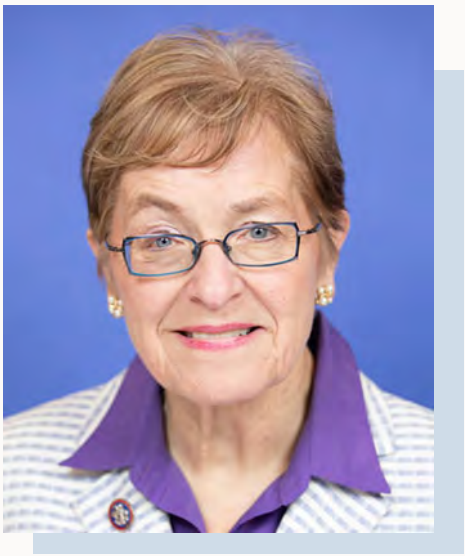
FEDERAL FUNDING PERSPECTIVE

A look at the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

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SINCE 2016, THE GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE (GLRI) has invested more than US$3 billion across nearly 7,000 projects to rebuild habitat, mitigate nutrient pollution, and manage invasive species for the benefit of all the communities—human, plant, and animal—that call the Great Lakes watershed home. Although it is a challenging year for federal appropriations, the GLRI benefits from strong bipartisan, bicameral support: the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations have recommended US$368 million and US$378 million, respectively, in fiscal year 2024 to fund the program.

Robust year-over-year funding for the GLRI is critical to fulfill the program's commitment to science-based restoration. Using the scientific process as a central feature of restoration creates room for creativity and asks for patience. Afterall, ecosystem recovery from chemical contamination, nutrient pollution, and degraded habitat takes time. Baseline studies help orient us and facilitate planning pathways towards recovery. Follow-up studies show us that native fishes return when in-stream habitats are improved and neighborhoods build opportunities for outdoor recreation and community revitalization. Creativity in science asks thoughtful questions about community needs and uses innovative methods and technologies to investigate solutions.

Meaningful projects can be found throughout the watershed; each harnesses a vision for our region that uses science-based restoration strategies to rebuild environments for the benefit of all communities. Continued funding accelerates progress towards a future that mitigates the environmental impact of past actions and avoids foisting additional burdens on future generations.

Let us all continue to work toward a shared goal of happy and healthy Great Lakes communities.

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