

Sander Levin

12th District, Michigan

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

November 26, 2012

Dear Lake St. Clair Stakeholders:

When the first Lake St. Clair Conference convened in 1999, there was a commonly held belief that Lake St. Clair had been overlooked when it came to environmental restoration and protection. Today, thirteen years later, it would be hard to argue that Lake St. Clair is still a “forgotten lake.” Through the efforts of many, we’ve made real progress in restoring Lake St. Clair. We need to continue this partnership of effort.

Back around the time of the first Lake St. Clair conference, many of us made the argument that – no less than any of the Great Lakes – Lake St. Clair deserved its own management plan. Led by Dave Bonior and the Michigan Delegation, Congress agreed to fund what eventually became the St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair Management Plan, which was finished in 2004. The plan was a call to action to restore and preserve Lake St. Clair and its watershed. The challenge – then and now – is to carry out the recommendations of the Management Plan.

A few years later, Carl Levin and I wrote a provision into the 2007 Water Resources Development Act that called for the Corps of Engineers to lead a partnership of Lake St. Clair stakeholders in developing a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) to come up with specific projects to implement the more than 100 individual recommendations contained in the Management Plan. Later, Carl and I were successful in lining up the funding necessary for the Corps to create the Lake St. Clair Partnership. Work on the SIP began in early 2011, and I know that many of you have contributed to the drafting effort. I am pleased to say that we are very close to winning approval for the SIP from Corps Headquarters in Washington.

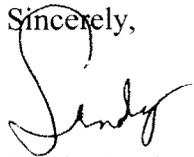
The SIP will help focus the efforts of all Lake St. Clair stakeholders on the implementation priorities, and hopefully give some of these projects a leg up when it comes to federal funding. Let me emphasize that the partnership of effort that created the SIP will continue to be essential as we move forward.

One key aspect of the federal government’s continued assistance in the restoration of Lake St. Clair is the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) begun by President Obama. Over the last three years, Congress has provided over \$1 billion for GLRI. Some of the money has already been awarded to restoration projects in the Lake St. Clair watershed. It is essential that Congress continue funding this vital program. In the House of Representatives, I have teamed up with Representatives John Dingell, Louise Slaughter of New York, Steve LaTourette of Ohio, and a bipartisan group of 31 other House lawmakers to urge continued robust funding for GLRI next year.

Another key federal program that supports Lake St. Clair is the Clean Water Revolving Fund. Since Congress created the Revolving Fund program in 1988, hundreds of millions of dollars in low-interest loans and grants have gone to projects that reduce water pollution in Lake St. Clair. The Revolving Fund represents a vital partnership of effort between the federal government, the State of Michigan, and local communities. Now is not the time for Congress to cut \$780 million from this program, as some on the House Appropriations Committee have proposed.

Lake St. Clair and its watershed are worth protecting. I look forward to continuing to partner with the Lakes' many stakeholders to complete the work of restoring this natural treasure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sander Levin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S".

Sander Levin
Member of Congress