

May 27, 2026 – click [here](#) to sign this letter.

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chairman, Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation  
& Infrastructure  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment  
and Public Works  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Capito, Ranking Member Whitehouse, Chairman Graves, and Ranking Member Larsen:

The undersigned organizations, representing community leaders, environmental advocates and clean water users from the Ohio River Basin and across the country, write to express our support for the bicameral and bipartisan Ohio River Restoration Program Act (H.R. 5966; S. 3796), and encourage you, as leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, to advance this legislation before the end of the 119th Congress.

The Ohio River Basin covers an expansive portion of the Eastern, Midwestern, and Southern parts of the United States, including parts of 15 states, and is home to over 30 million citizens, including the ancestral and historical homelands of over 40 federally recognized Tribal Nations. The waters of the basin supply services and benefits, including drinking water, recreation, and transportation, and they are the foundation of the region's economy and culture.

While the region has undergone numerous environmental improvements in recent decades, serious problems remain, including persistent legacy contaminants, sewage contamination, non-point source runoff, invasive species, and flooding—all of which can foul drinking water, threaten public health, limit recreational opportunities, and harm local economies. Further, emerging contaminants pose threats to drinking water and human health nationally. If left unaddressed, these challenges will get worse and more expensive to solve.

The good news is that there are manageable solutions to these challenges. Over the last several decades, the federal government has worked to restore and protect many of the nation's large, multi-state watersheds through targeted, strategic investments. Across the U.S. there are many examples of how these regional initiatives to restore and protect the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Everglades, Puget Sound, and other great waters have resulted in ecosystem recovery followed by economic investments and growth<sup>[SN1]</sup>. These successful partnerships between the federal government and states provide a strong precedent in accelerating progress in large landscape conservation initiatives. These efforts have proven immensely popular with communities and have attracted strong bipartisan support in Congress. The federal government's ability to bring the resources to bear on conservation efforts across multiple states and Tribal Nations; to provide a bird's-eye view across vast regions to evaluate, prioritize, and manage restoration priorities on a landscape scale; to convene diverse stakeholders within a region; and to lean on its successful track record in other parts of the country in managing large landscape-scale restoration efforts all contribute to the success of such programs—programs that can benefit the Ohio River Basin as well.<sup>[SN2]</sup>

The Ohio River Restoration Program Act presents a similar solution to these issues, modeled on successful programs that benefit neighboring watersheds feeding the Great Lakes, as well as others across the country. It would establish a **non-regulatory** program at the Environmental Protection Agency to coordinate federal restoration investments for the waters of the Ohio River basin, supporting federal and non-federal partners' efforts to improve water quality, restore fish and wildlife habitat, control invasive species, support public access opportunities, and

more. These investments can reverse water impairments and enhance outdoor recreation assets across the region, and there is an urgent need to address these issues now, before the problems get worse and more expensive to solve.

The waters, ecosystems, and natural resources of the Ohio River Basin underpin the basin's economy and the potential for business and job growth. Abundant, clean water and healthy ecosystems help attract and retain a workforce and ensure the economic well-being of urban and rural communities. This program would restore the waters of the basin without impacting navigation on the Ohio River. This vital commercial artery carries over one-third of U.S. waterborne commerce, moving over \$43 billion in commodities each year. Explicitly, the Ohio River Restoration Program Act stipulates that any projects carried out under the Ohio River Restoration Program must be "compatible with the ability of the Corps of Engineers to maintain navigation and other Federal projects in the Ohio River," thus ensuring uninterrupted river commerce alongside healthy waters, healthy communities, and healthy economies.

We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to discussions on your respective committees.

Signed,

Ohio River Basin Alliance – Chris Lorentz, PhD, Chair

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