

June 18, 2026

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 interconnected waters of the Ohio River basin provide drinking water to more than 30 million people in portions of Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, as well as the Seneca Nation of Indians and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The waters of the basin are the foundation of the region's economy and culture.

Unfortunately, many local waters in the Ohio River basin suffer from serious problems, including toxic pollution, sewage contamination, non-point source runoff, invasive species, and flooding—all of which fouls drinking water, threatens public health, limits recreational opportunities, and harms local economies. In fact, 69% of stream miles and 64% of lake acres assessed by state agencies in the region have impaired waters that do not meet water quality standards for fishing, swimming, drinking water, or healthy aquatic life, and nearly every state has issued a fish consumption advisory for one or more waterways within the basin. There are also at least 146 toxic waste dumps – so-called Superfund sites – in the Ohio River Basin. Some of these toxic sites are already contaminating water supplies, while others threaten to. 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 are bolstering efforts to restore and protect the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Everglades, Puget Sound, and other great waters. The implementation of regional collaboration has resulted in ecosystem recovery followed by economic investments and growth. These successful partnerships between the federal government, states, and Tribes 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 Ohio River Restoration Program Act presents a similar solution to these issues. It would establish a non-regulatory program at the Environmental Protection Agency to coordinate federal restoration investments for the interconnected waters of the Ohio River basin, supporting federal and non-federal partners' efforts to clean up toxic pollution, restore fish and wildlife habitat, control invasive species, support public access opportunities, and more. These investments can reverse water impairments and enhance natural assets across the region, thus ensuring healthy waters, healthy communities, and healthy economies for millions of Americans.

There is an urgent need to address these issues now, before the problems get worse and more expensive to solve. The Ohio River Restoration Protection Act supports proven solutions to protect the drinking water, public health, jobs, recreation opportunities, and quality of life for millions of people who live in this region. We appreciate your consideration of the Ohio River Restoration Program Act and look forward to discussions on your respective committees. If you have questions regarding this request, please reach out to Ohio River Basin Alliance Chair Chris Lorentz at Lorentzc@thomasmore.edu, or Healthy Waters Coalition Director Jordan Lubetkin at Lubetkin@nwf.org.

Sincerely,

• **Ohio River Basin Alliance**

• **Healthy Waters Coalition**

- Allegheny CleanWays
- Allegheny County Conservation District
- American Rivers
- Appalachian Citizens' Law Center
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Appalachian Voices
- Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Audubon Great Lakes
- Aullwood Audubon Center
- Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
- Banklick Watershed Council
- BB Riverboats
- Beargrass Creek Alliance
- Bernheim Forest and Arboretum
- Buffalo Trace Land Trust
- Cardinal Land Conservancy
- Center for Water Security and Cooperation
- Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana
- Conservation Law Center
- Crawford County Recreation and Tourism
- Dearborn County Soil & Water Conservation District and Indiana State Alternate Representative to National Association of Conservation Districts
- DLZ National, Inc.
- Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services
- Fleming County Conservation District
- Floyd County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds
- Friends of the Riverfront
- Friends of the Tug Fork River
- Friends of The White River, Inc.
- George Rogers Clark Land Trust
- Grange Insurance Audubon Center
- Greenbrier River Watershed Association
- Groundwork USA
- Historic Locust Grove
- Hoosier Environmental Council
- Hoosier Heartland Resource Conservation and Development Council

- Illinois Division IWLA
- Independence Conservancy
- Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Indiana Conservation Voters
- Indiana Lakes Management Society
- Indiana Land Protection Alliance
- Indiana Parks Alliance
- Indiana Sportsmen Roundtable
- Indiana Wildlife Federation
- Izaak Walton League of America
- Izaak Walton League of America Indiana Division
- Izaak Walton League of America Pennsylvania Division
- Jacobs Creek Watershed Association
- Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Kenton County Conservation District
- Kentucky Conservation Committee
- Kentucky Resources Council
- Kentucky Riverkeeper
- Kentucky Waterways Alliance
- Lewis and Clark Trust, Inc.
- Loyalhanna Watershed Association, Inc.
- MetroParks of Butler County
- Mill Creek Alliance
- Mountain Watershed Association
- Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
- National Audubon Society
- National Road Heritage Corridor
- National Wildlife Federation
- Native Plants Unlimited LLC
- Ohio Conservation Federation
- Ohio Environmental Council
- Ohio River Foundation
- Ohio River National Water Trail, Parkersburg, WV
- Ohio River Way
- Ohio Water Partnership
- Ohio Wetlands Association
- Oxbow, Inc.
- Paddle Perry, Inc.
- Payne Hollow on the Ohio

- PennFuture
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Pennsylvania Resources Council
- Pennsylvania United
- Perry County Chamber of Commerce
- Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy
- Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium
- Prairie Rivers Network
- Red Oaks Forest School
- ReImagine Appalachia
- Riddle Music and Sound
- River City Paddle Sports
- River Fields
- River Heritage Conservancy
- River Management Society
- Riverlife
- RiverWise
- Rural Action
- Sharks Fishing Club - West Virginia Chapter
- Sharpsburg Neighborhood Organization
- Somerset Conservation District
- Spearhead Agriculture and Management
- Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project
- Sustainable Economies
- Tennessee Wildlife Federation
- The (Tippecanoe) Watershed Foundation
- The Kentucky Steward LLC
- The Miami Conservancy District
- The Mon Water Project
- The Nature Conservancy
- Thomas More University Biology Field Station
- Three Rivers Waterkeeper
- Upstream Pittsburgh
- Village Garden Club of Sewickley PA
- Virginia Conservation Network
- Wabash Busseron Alliance
- Wabash Valley Audubon Society
- Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Washington County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Washington County Watershed Alliance
- Watersheds of South Pittsburgh
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Westmoreland Conservation District
- White River Alliance
- Wilderness Louisville
- West Virginia Rivers Coalition