



*THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST COALITION*

## **GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE**

May 24, 2007

The Honorable Stephen Johnson  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Johnson:

We are writing to follow-up on concerns raised by a recently released Government Accountability Office (GAO) report titled “GREAT LAKES: EPA and States Have Made Progress in Implementing the BEACH Act, but Additional Actions Could Improve Public Health Protection.” While we appreciate the ability of the EPA to stretch funding, we encourage you to reconsider how your agency distributes BEACH Act grant funds to states.

Contaminated water along Great Lakes beaches continues to be a human health threat to swimmers and others that come in contact with the water. Water borne illnesses have been reported in several states, some with serious consequences. The Natural Resources Defense Council reported that in 2005 beaches in the Great Lakes had at least 2,740 days of health advisories or beach closures. Considering that beaches in the Great Lakes are only open on a seasonal basis, the information about advisories and closures is concerning.

In the GAO’s report, the GAO found that EPA’s formula to distribute grants “does not accurately reflect the monitoring needs of the states.” The BEACH Act requires EPA to consider three factors in the formula for distributing grant funds—length of beach season, beach miles, and beach use. In practice, EPA places considerably more weight on the beach season factor than the other factors. Because of that emphasis, states that have seasonal beaches but differing coastlines and coastal populations will receive about the same amount of grant funding. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to reconsider the formula used to distribute BEACH Act grants to states.

We appreciate your support for improving the Great Lakes and look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



George V. Voinovich  
United States Senator



Carl Levin  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Russell D. Feingold  
United States Senator



Mark Kirk  
Member Congress



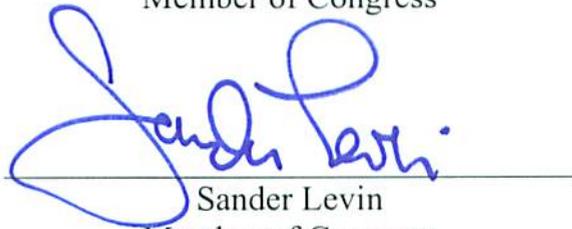
John Dingell  
Member of Congress



Brian M. Higgins  
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Dale Kildee  
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Sander Levin  
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