

Great Lakes Fishery Research Authorization

22 MAR 16



POSITION PAPER

UPPER PENINSULA ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION

Senator Gary Peters
Hart Senate Office Building Suite 724
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Peters,

The Board of Directors of the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition (UPEC) wishes to voice our support for S.2569, the Great Lakes Fishery Research Authorization (GLFRA) Act of 2016. This legislation, to provide clear authorization and funding for a federal fisheries research program in the Great Lakes, is vital for science-based management of our natural resources.

Organized in 1976, UPEC is the longest serving environmental organization in Michigan's U.P., We strive to preserve the unique cultural and natural resources of the Upper Peninsula, through public education, the promotion of sound land stewardship, and reasoned dialogue with communities, governments, industries and others with whom we share this land.

We believe the current model of fishery research in the Great Lakes is inadequate, and appreciate your leadership to address this issue. The Great Lakes commercial, sport and tribal fishing industry is worth approximately \$7 billion annually. Yet the fisheries science required to inform management decisions currently functions under a patchwork of legislation and an Executive Order. This leads to inconsistent funding despite the Great Lakes fishery facing new threats from invasive species, habitat loss, and climate change. The GLFRA Act addresses this problem by providing explicit authorization for the US Geological Survey (USGS) Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) to carry out Great Lakes fishery research.

The GLSC currently has large research vessels in each of the five Great Lakes, and is the organization best prepared to support a federal fisheries science program. The science already conducted aboard these vessels, including fish stock assessments and invasive species research, is important information for state, provincial, and tribal management agencies in the region. The GLFRA Act builds upon this work by explicitly and fully authorizing this science program. This would (1) ensure staff and equipment is available for consistent lake-wide biological monitoring and (2) support the development and deployment of new sampling methods and assessment techniques.

Thank you for your commitment to environmental issues and your support of our natural resources through the sound management. We look forward to a new era of sustainable Great Lakes fisheries and vibrant coastal Great Lakes communities.

Sincerely,

Horst Schmidt
President



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