

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2024

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Interim Chair, Subcommittee on Energy and
Water Development
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kennedy
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Christopher Coons
Chair, Subcommittee on State, Foreign
Operations, and Related Programs
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As Congress considers the Fiscal Year 2025 Bills for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Energy and Water Development, and State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, we ask you to continue to provide robust federal funding for programs supporting the Lake Champlain basin. Lake Champlain provides significant environmental, recreational, historic, and educational value to our region. We have a responsibility to expand federal support for the Lake so our constituents can benefit from these opportunities for generations to come.

Work in the Lake Champlain basin is funded through several different federal programs. One key funding stream is the **Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Lake Champlain Basin Program**. Since 1990, the Program has protected the lake's ecosystems and fostered thriving communities within the basin. This funding is used to implement the Program's intrastate management plan, which addresses invasive species, nutrient and toxic substances pollution, conservation needs, and public education around these topics. Financial support from the **Heritage Partnership Program**, meanwhile, has allowed state partners to promote educational and recreational opportunities around the lake. Together, these programs teach people of all ages about the history and science of the lake and region, which is of particular importance as we approach the semiquincentennial anniversary of the Revolutionary War and commemorate the role of the lake in our country's founding.

The **Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Control Program** supports efforts to counter the impact of parasitic sea lampreys, an aquatic invasive species (AIS) that threatens larger fish in Lake Champlain. Over the past 30 years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has worked with agencies in New York and Vermont to develop and implement this highly successful program, which has been proven to reduce mortality rates for salmon, lake trout, and other species of concern. Effective AIS control has helped rebuild indigenous ecosystems, thereby

creating more recreational opportunities for boaters and anglers and strengthening the local economy. The USFWS must have the funds it needs to continue this work.

Finally, the **Great Lakes Fishery Commission** plays an important role in promoting science, controlling AIS, and facilitating interstate, intrastate, and international partnerships for the conservation of Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog. In addition to the sea lamprey, Lake Champlain is home to 51 known AIS, with many more found in surrounding bodies of water that pose a risk to the lake. Research at the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Plant Control Laboratory** supports these efforts to manage AIS.

Given the importance of these federal programs to the Lake Champlain watershed, we ask that the following accounts be funded to continue their essential work:

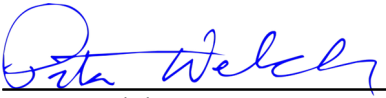
- **Lake Champlain Basin Program** (Section 120 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act)
 - Subcommittee: Interior
 - Agency or Account: Title II, Environmental Protection Agency/ Environmental Programs and Management/Geographic Programs/Lake Champlain
 - Amount: \$35,000,000, an increase of \$10,000,00 from the FY24 enacted level
- **Heritage Partnership Program**
 - Subcommittee: Interior
 - Agency or Account: Title I, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, national Recreation and Preservation/Heritage Partnership Program
 - Amount: \$30,693,600, an increase of \$1,461,600 from the FY24 enacted level
- **Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Control**
 - Subcommittee: Interior
 - Agency or Account: Title I/Department of the Interior/Fish and Wildlife Service/Resource Management/Fish and Aquatic Conservation/Aquatic habitat and species conservation
 - Amount: \$858,900, an increase of \$40,900 from the FY24 enacted level
- **Great Lakes Fishery Commission**
 - Subcommittee: SFOPS
 - Agency or Account: Title 1 – Department of State and Related Agency/International Commissions/International Fisheries Commissions
 - Project: Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog
 - Report Language: “The Committee recommends \$50,000,000 for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, including funds for the Commission to address risks to its programs, fund its infrastructure strategy, control the invasive sea lamprey, conduct science and research to aid cross-border fishery management, and control grass carp in the Great Lakes. The amount also includes \$10,000,000 for the Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog basins, \$500,000 for the Lake Memphremagog fishery, and \$1,000,000 to address grass carp in the Great Lakes.

The Committee also supports the efforts of the GLFC to combat other invasive carp species outside of the Great Lakes Basin.”

- The FY24 enacted level was \$50,000,000 and included this report language
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Plant Control Laboratory**
 - Subcommittee: Energy and Water Development
 - Agency or Account: Title I, /Corps of Engineers/Construction/Remaining Items/Aquatic Plant Control Program
 - Amount: \$22,550,000, an increase of \$2,050,000 from the FY24 enacted level

Thank you for considering our requests. We look forward to continuing our work with you to protect this vital lake.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator