

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 21, 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related
Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As Congress considers the Fiscal Year 2026 Bills for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Energy and Water Development, State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, and Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, 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 interstate 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 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War and commemorate the role of Lake Champlain 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.

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. Funding through the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Plant Control Laboratory** supports research and other activities to manage AIS.

Finally, the **Sea Grant National College Program** provides important resources to the Lake Champlain basin through the Lake Champlain Sea Grant Institute, a partnership between the University of Vermont and the State University of New York at Plattsburgh. For more than two decades, this program has conducted outreach, education, and applied research throughout the basin to protect water resources, manage sustainable fisheries, and promote healthy coastal ecosystems and economies.

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, Environment, and Related Agencies
 - Agency or Account: Title II, Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Programs and Management, Geographic Programs, Lake Champlain
 - Amount: \$27,000,000, an increase of \$2,000,00 from FY24 enacted levels
 - Report Language: “*Lake Champlain* - The bill provides \$27,000,000 for the Lake Champlain program. These funds shall be allocated through the Lake Champlain Basin Program, other than continuing the enacted levels to support significant, impactful projects identified in the State implementation plan that will make measurable progress towards meeting the phosphorus reduction targets of the EPA's 2016 Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load Plan for Lake Champlain.”
 - Note: The FY24 Interior bill included this report language
- **Heritage Partnership Program**
 - Subcommittee: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
 - Agency or Account: Title I, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Recreation and Preservation, Heritage Partnership Program
 - Amount: Level funding of \$29,232,000

- **Lake Champlain Sea Lamprey Control**
 - Subcommittee: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
 - 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: Level funding of \$818,000
 - Report Language: “*Population Assessment and Cooperative Management*.-The agreement provides \$28,613,000, which includes \$818,000 for the Lake Champlain Sea lamprey program.
 - Note: The FY24 Interior bill included this report language
- **Great Lakes Fishery Commission**
 - Subcommittee: State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
 - Agency or Account: Title 1, Department of State and Related Agencies, International Commissions, International Fisheries Commissions
 - Project: Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog
 - Amount: \$54,830,000, an increase of \$4,830,000 from FY24 enacted levels, which includes \$10,500,000 for the Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog Basins
 - Bill Language: “Provided, That of the amount provided under this heading, \$54,830,000 be made available for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, including \$10,000,000 for the Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog basins, \$500,000 for the Lake Memphremagog fishery: Provided further, That funds provided under this heading shall be made available in the amounts and for the purposes specified under this heading in the report accompanying this Act.”
 - Report Language: “The Committee recommends \$54,830,000 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.”
 - Note: 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: Level funding of \$20,500,000
 - Report Language: “*Aquatic Plant Control Program* - The agreement includes additional funding of \$5,000,000 to address infestations of hydrilla in Lake Champlain and the Connecticut River basins.”

- Note: The FY24 Energy and Water bill included this report language
- **Sea Grant National College Program** (Lake Champlain Sea Grant)
 - Subcommittee: Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
 - Agency or Account: Title I, Department of Commerce, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, Operations, Research, and Facilities
 - Amount: Level funding of \$80,000,000

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