GREAT LAKES RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

GREAT LAKES UNITED

TESTIMONY TO HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANOGRAPHY, GREAT LAKES AND THE OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF

Presented by:

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TESTIMONY TO HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANOGRAPHY, GREAT LAKES AND THE OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF

My name is Jack Manno and I am Associate Director of the Great Lakes Research Consortium, an organization of ten colleges and universities in New York State and six affiliates in the Province of Ontario dedicated to improving our understanding of the Great Lakes ecosystem. My testimony today is presented in cooperation with Great Lakes United on whose Board of Directors I sit. Great Lakes United is a binational coalition of over 180 organizations from throughout the Great Lakes Basin dedicated to the conservation and protection of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River ecosystem. The Great Lakes United coalition includes sportsmen groups, labor unions, conservation and environmental groups, native North American health and safety organizations, university research groups, and municipalities.

On behalf of the Great Lakes Research Consortium and Great Lakes United I thank Congressman Hertel and the members of the Subcommittee on Oceanography, Great Lakes and the Outer Continental Shelf for the invitation to address questions related to federal funding for monitoring and scientific research in the Great Lakes.

I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to stress the critical importance of the gradual accumulation of knowledge and wisdom we know as environmental research. Sometimes this research involves simple experiments such as those with lake water in test tubes in 1965 that showed conclusively the role of phosphorus in stimulating the algal blooms then choking our lakes. Sometimes it brings sudden shock, like that caused when scientists monitoring a Lake Superior island discovered small quantities of a pesticide used only on fields of cotton, waking us up to the importance of contaminants carried long distances on the wind. Sometimes our subjects are subtle, like the disturbing manifestations of behavioral and other changes that could imply a degradation of ecosystem well-being on a broad scale. Sometimes they are grand, like the calculations of total biomass in a lake so that fisheries can be more carefully managed.

The International Joint Commission has written

> *the Great Lakes research community has played a central role in alerting the governments and the public to the need to become aware of the human impacts on the Great Lakes system.*

There is no question that federally-supported research and monitoring are <u>essential</u> for the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes region. Yet, throughout the period between 1982-1990 repeated attempts have been made to reduce or eliminate funding of critical Great Lakes research and monitoring programs.

Despite these attempts, thanks to Congressman Hertel and the other members of Congress who have consistently fought for these programs over the years, Congress has managed to provide nearly level funding for Great Lakes research since 1981.

But no increases for ten years means that the purchasing power of federal Great Lakes research programs has steadily eroded. And that translates into an inability to purchase advanced scientific equipment or improve sampling and monitoring techniques. The federal government expects industry to use the best available technology to control pollution, the federal Great Lakes programs should also be provided with the best technology available to monitor their successes and failures, and to carry out clean-up and restoration efforts.

The chronic underfunding of the Sea Lamprey control program is one example of the short-sightedness of cutting federal Great Lakes programs. Insufficient funding has undermined the effort to properly treat lamprey spawning locations. The Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, supported by Great Lakes United and other organizations, has repeatedly requested funding to develop new alternative non-chemical methods of controlling lamprey. Yet the important research needed to bring this about has gone unfunded and as a result the billion dollar Great Lakes sportfishery could be threatened.

The Administration's request for only $1.6 million of the $30 million authorized by Congress in its last session is another example. Scientists at the Great Lakes Research Consortium, like others throughout the Basin, have concluded that there is an urgent need to improve our understanding of the impacts of the zebra mussel on the aquatic ecosystem. We need better information of the mussel's biology and life history, the complex ways it alters its surroundings, and the best, most ecologically sound way to manage and control the damage they cause. Without this knowledge, we are likely to react to crises, possibly forgoing an ecosystem approach, and potentially causing additional damage in the process.

This point bears repeating over and over. Always responding to crises, or the whim of political fashion, is not the way to do environmental research and monitoring. If we consistently supported and maintained systematic and well-coordinated research and monitoring programs over time, we would be in a position to carry out environmental protection and enhancement based on knowledge and understanding of the ecosystem.

In its reports to the governments of Canada and the United States the International Joint Commission has termed funding cuts, "shortsighted and potentially dangerous." To steal a line from common-sense wisdom, "if you think the cost of producing knowledge is expensive, try ignorance." The member organizations of Great Lakes United share this view and at the 1990 Annual Meeting in Green Bay, Wisconsin, passed a resolution calling

on the federal government to "increase the funding for federal research programs because of their losses due to inflation since 1980.

We are very pleased that the Administration in its 1992 Budget proposals has recommended an increase in funding for Great Lakes programs for the first time in a decade. The proposed increases would bring levels to within 2% of the 1980 inflation adjusted level.

While this increased expenditure is positive in sum, many individual and important Great Lakes research and monitoring organizations will see reduced funding under the proposed budget. In particular, we are disturbed by the substantial reduction proposed for the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory for which the Administration has requested $4.2 million, $1.2 million below its current level. Other programs facing cuts are: NOAA's Coastal Zone Management Program, and Sea Grant. Sea Grant is a worthwhile case in point. Several times in the 1980's its budget was threatened with elimination, only to be restored by Congress. Sea Grant is absolutely essential for university research, and its periods of uncertainty undermine the efforts to carry out meaningful long-term environmental research.

During the last session of Congress a number of important legislative initiatives were passed. These bills addressed critical Great Lakes needs such as the development and implementation of Remedial Action Plans, the promulgation of uniform Great Lakes Water Quality Standards, and the control of the zebra mussel infestation. In total, these bills authorize $208 million in new funding for Great Lakes programs. Unfortunately, however, the Presidential Budget request largely fails to respond to Congress' concerns. The passage of this valuable legislation will be rendered largely meaningless if resources are not available to do the job.

Scientists, the concerned public, members of Congress and their staff, responsible business people and others throughout the Great Lakes basin have invested considerable time and energy into understanding and resolving environmental problems. The federal Great Lakes research and monitoring programs play a major role in that effort and should be adequately supported.

Chairman Hertel, we thank you and the members of this committee again for the opportunity to testify here today. We encourage you to continue your efforts on behalf of the Great Lakes and we look forward to cooperating with you in future.