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GLRI Funding is Vital in the Fight against an Asian Carp Invasion

MADISON- In response to an Asian Carp being found beyond the electric barrier and less than ten miles from Lake Michigan in the Illinois Waterway, Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released this statement in support of continued funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI):

“The Great Lakes are a national treasure. Home to 20% of the world’s fresh surface water, the Great Lakes supply 1.5 million jobs, \$62 billion in annual wages, and drinking water for 30 million people. The GLRI has been a critical component in maintaining and increasing the prosperity of the Great Lakes. With \$331 million supporting 416 projects in Wisconsin since 2010, the GLRI has generated \$2 in economic return for every \$1 spent. In Green Bay, the GLRI has helped to address phosphorus runoff, restore northern pike habitat, remove invasive species, reestablish the Cat Island chain, and more.

“With the discovery of an Asian Carp near Lake Michigan, a significant threat to the Great Lakes could be on the horizon. Annually, \$40 million is transferred from GLRI to the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee to stop this threat. The money from GLRI has helped to establish the electric barrier, coordinate rapid response, and harvest millions of pounds of Asian Carp annually from the Illinois Waterway. The federal government’s financial commitment pales in comparison to that of state and local governments, but is crucial to the long-term health of the Great Lakes. At a time where the Great Lakes are improving but threats still remain, reducing federal funding to Great Lakes restoration should be viewed as nothing less than reckless.

“I personally have worked for years on bipartisan efforts to improve the Great Lakes by authoring proposals to eliminate plastic microbeads, combat the invasive sea lamprey, and create a phosphorus multi-discharger variance to reduce non-point source pollution. With these efforts and the restoration projects in the Lower Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern, economic prosperity is returning to the bay. However, if Asian Carp establish in Lake Michigan, they could thrive in Green Bay and contribute to the destruction of our fishing and tourism industry while potentially impacting drinking water and human health. The GLRI is vital to economic and ecological health in the Great Lakes region, and I stand with many of my Republican colleagues in supporting continued funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.”

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