

## (March 9, 2007) Congressman Lipinski Marks Great Lakes Day and Clean Environment Week

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Legislation to Protect and Restore Great Lakes Passed in House

WASHINGTON, DC - This week, Congressman Dan Lipinski celebrated Great Lakes Day and Clean Environment Week by helping move three key water quality bills through the House of Representatives and by holding a hearing to consider other policy proposals for protecting and restoring the Great Lakes.

Congressman Lipinski helped pass the three bills in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in February, and this week he helped pass them on the House floor. Congressman Lipinski is the only Chicago area representative to serve on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

"Protecting and restoring the Great Lakes is critical for everyone, whether you want to swim, fish, boat, lie on the beach, or - most importantly - just have clean water to drink," said Lipinski. "This has always been a priority of mine and I am happy that we were able to take a step forward by getting these important clean water bills passed. Increased federal funding for water infrastructure is essential to the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes, the Chicago region, and the nation."

On Wednesday, by a vote of 367 to 58, the House of Representatives approved The Water Quality Investment Act of 2007 (H.R. 569) to authorize appropriations for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) sewer overflow control grant program, despite opposition from the White House. This bill would aid cities and states in building and improving sewer infrastructure to prevent the dumping of sewage into lakes and rivers.

"It is incredible that some of our municipalities utilize sewer systems constructed as far back as when Abraham Lincoln was president. The system is deteriorating, and as a result, state and local authorities are often unable to stop sewage from flowing into neighboring rivers, beaches, basements, and lakes," said Lipinski. "Residents will always remember the summer of 2002 when Great Lakes' beaches were closed because of public health dangers, much of it due to the dumping of raw sewage into the lakes. Congress must clean up its act when it comes to clean water, and this legislation is a good start."

On Thursday, the House approved the Healthy Communities Water Supply Act of 2007 (H.R. 700). This bill would authorize \$125 million under the Clean Water Act for EPA grants to fund projects that increase usable water supply by encouraging innovation in water reclamation, reuse, and conservation. Today, the House passed the third water quality bill, the Water Quality Financing Act of 2007 (H.R. 720). This bill would reauthorize the Clean Water State Revolving Fund to provide \$20 billion over five years in loans for water-pollution-abatement projects that assist communities in meeting their water quality infrastructure goals.

Earlier this week, Congressman Lipinski hosted an ad hoc congressional hearing at the Shedd Aquarium highlighting the deteriorating condition of the Great Lakes. The representatives heard testimony from federal, local, and environmental experts regarding threats to the lakes' ecosystems and ongoing restoration efforts.