

OR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 29, 2008

CONTACT:  
Emily Green, Great Lakes Program Director, (608) 257-4994  
Melissa Damaschke, Great Lakes Representative – Michigan, (313) 965-0055

## **Congress Passes Great Lakes Cleanup Bill**

### **Sierra Club Applauds Reauthorization of the Great Lakes Legacy Act**

DETROIT, MI – The Sierra Club Great Lakes Program applauds Congress for passing the Great Lakes Legacy Act of 2008. The bill reauthorizes a highly successful program to clean up toxic hotspots in the Great Lakes at the current funding level of \$54 million per year for the next two years.

“We applaud all of the cosponsors, especially Reps. James Oberstar (MN) and Vern Ehlers (MI), for their leadership on this legislation,” said Emily Green, Director of the Sierra Club’s Great Lakes Program. “Over the past five years, the Great Lakes Legacy Act has proven to be an effective tool in cleaning up the Great Lakes and restoring this important natural resource. Experience shows we can use modern technologies to safely remove and dispose of contamination, such as with the clean up of the Detroit River Black Lagoon.”

In winter of 2005, the Black Lagoon of the Detroit River became the first project successfully cleaned up with funding from the Great Lakes Legacy Act. The site was contaminated with polluted sediment containing toxins like mercury and PCBs. Funds from the Legacy Act provided for dredging that removed the contaminants and helped restore the health to this area and its shoreline.

“The Great Lakes are home to a \$4.5 billion sport fishing industry,” said Melissa Damaschke, Great Lakes representative for the Sierra Club. “We can use funds provided by the Legacy Act to clean up historically contaminated Areas of Concern and provide benefit to this multibillion dollar sport fishing industry.”

A recent Brookings Institution study found that cleaning up contaminated sites and investing in other aspects of Great Lakes restoration would result in over \$50 billion of economic benefits, such as increased coastal property values, to the Great Lakes region. (Brookings Institution, “Healthy Waters, Strong Economy”)

Re-authorization of the Legacy Act was recommended by the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, a comprehensive set of solutions to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

“This is our opportunity to change the legacy we leave our children from toxic contamination to water that is safe to drink and fish that are safe to eat” said Damaschke. “Now is our chance to be responsible stewards of the lakes, cleaning them up for our families and our future.”

###