



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

DAVE HANSEN

SENATOR – 30TH DISTRICT

ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER

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Testimony: Great Lakes Water Levels

**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment**

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U.S. House of Representatives
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Minority (B-375 RHOB) - (202) 225-4360
Eddie Bernice Johnson, Texas, Chairwoman

Thank you Madame Chair and members for convening this hearing today and for the invitation to testify.

I am State Senator Dave Hansen. I represent the 30th Senate District in Northeastern Wisconsin which encompasses the city of Green Bay north to the City of Marinette, Wisconsin. As a lifelong resident of Northeastern Wisconsin, I see the importance of the Great Lakes to the life, health and economic vitality of our area. The residents of the 30th Senate District rely heavily on Lake Michigan every day for our drinking water, for our economy and for our recreation.

As a member of the Great Lakes Commission I have been involved firsthand with the initiatives of that organization to restore, protect and sustain the Great Lakes.

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As part of this initiative, the Great Lakes Commission has called on Congress to strengthen national investment in the Great Lakes. We need help from the federal government to stop the influx of invasive species, to do more comprehensive study on lake levels, and to fix the problems that are causing our lake levels to drop.

I was happy to stand with the Governor last week as he announced an agreement on ratifying the Great Lakes Compact. Now that we have reached agreement on the compact, I am looking forward to standing with my legislative colleagues to ratify the compact and send it on to Congress for final approval. At that time, I would urge you to approve ratification of this historic agreement which will provide for more responsible use of and protect this vital resource.

But while approval of the Great Lakes Compact will provide a framework for future protection of the lakes, we all know that our Great Lakes are in trouble today. A new study says Lakes Michigan and Huron are losing 2.5 billion gallons per day. Our Great Lake levels are dropping nearly 2 inches per year. From 1999-2003 lake levels have dropped by over three feet. Last summer, Lake Superior reached its lowest level since 1926. Whatever the cause, it's clear that the falling lake levels in Lakes Michigan and Superior are affecting commerce in the Great Lakes, causing increased costs for dredging, affecting tourism, homeowners' properties and wildlife habitat.

What is causing this? Some have argued that a 40 year old dredging project on the St. Clair River has caused an increased water flow to Lake Erie. Some say that climate change is affecting rain and snow fall patterns and increasing evaporation or maybe it's a combination of factors. I will let the experts speak on this issue. However, it is clear that the Great Lakes need more attention and commitment to their preservation. As we all know, the Great Lakes holds 18% of the world's fresh surface water and 95% of all the fresh water in North America. I will do my part as a member of the Great Lakes Commission and as a State Senator, but I also urge the Committee and the federal government to do all it can to protect this valuable resource that defines and sustains the Great Lakes region.

Thank you.