

[Date]

Hon. [Member of Congress/Senator]

AND write to Department of Interior

Dear [Representative/Senator]:

Dear [Interior]

I am an avid angler and I strongly support federal and state projects that protect and improve the Great Lakes fishery. I understand that Great Lakes fishery agencies are using new technologies to clip and tag all fish stocked into the Great Lakes. Known as the "Great Lakes Mass Marking Initiative" this technology will vastly improve fishery management and improve the resource. I urge you to fund this initiative.

Mass marking of fish has tremendous benefits. It allows fishery managers from the states, tribes, Province of Ontario, and the federal governments of Canada and the United States to work more closely with each other and with stakeholders. Closer cooperation is important because these agencies and some private clubs together stock millions of fish into the lakes each year and we need to be sure the investments are most appropriate. Mass marking will help the managers better understand the ratio of wild to hatchery fish thus helping to better understand how much natural reproduction is occurring in the Great Lakes, which affects stocking decisions. Mass marking also allows anglers to participate more closely in the management process and to make more informed decisions about whether to release or keep fish.

[If you have seen mass marking in person, or seen pictures, a personal paragraph here would be appropriate. For example:

In [date], I had the chance to visit the [name] hatchery and see the mass marking equipment at work for myself. It was impressive. In a matter of days, the machines clipped and tagged every fish in the hatchery. Now, scientists will know exactly how the fish was raised, where it was stocked, and whether it survived. This is a tremendous leap forward in Great Lakes fishery management.

Funding for mass marking has come directly from Congress and from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Some capital equipment is still needed and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will require funds to operate the equipment. I am concerned that the Fish and Wildlife Service is not giving mass marking the same attention in the Great Lakes region as it does in other parts of the country.

Thank you for supporting projects that benefit the Great Lakes fishery. This resource is important to me and the mass marking project will help ensure that the multi-billion-dollar fishery is protected and well managed.

Sincerely,

[Name and Affiliation]