

**SUMMARY AND FEEDBACK FROM
THE CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING
AND DETROIT RIVER/LAKE ST.
CLAIR BOAT TOUR HELD ON
AUGUST 14, 2001**



**Organized and Hosted by
Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan**



INTRODUCTION

In an effort to help strengthen the linkage between Great Lakes science and policy, and to help catalyze actions to preserve one of our Nation's most valuable natural resources, Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan organized and hosted a congressional briefing and boat tour of the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair on August 14, 2001. This congressional briefing and boat tour offered a unique opportunity for scientists, researchers, and natural resource managers to brief elected officials and key policy makers on timely Great Lakes issues. It was held aboard the 80-foot Pride of Michigan used as a training vessel for the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The 80-foot Pride of Michigan used as a training vessel for U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps.



The Sea Cadet Corps is sponsored by the U.S. Navy League, and supported by the Department of the Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard. Cadets receive training aboard Navy and Coast Guard ships and schools, and are authorized by the Secretary of the Navy to wear Navy uniforms, appropriately marked with Sea Cadet Corps insignia. In addition to seamanship training, cadets can also attend Navy aviation and construction training. More information on the Sea Cadet Corps is available online at:
<http://www.prideofmichigan.org/>

Over 40 people participated in the August 14th event, including elected officials, policy makers, university professors, government scientists and natural resource

managers, and representatives of U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Program – Great Lakes Division (Table 1). The program for the day-long briefing and boat tour included:

- Introductory comments and welcome from Senator Stabenow;
- Issue-specific briefings by experts, followed questions and answers;
- Roundtable discussion at the end of both the morning and afternoon sessions; and
- Concluding remarks by Senator Stabenow (see Table 2 for complete program agenda).

Continental breakfast, lunch, and coffee breaks provided for one-on-one discussions and networking.

Table 1. A list of participants in the Congressional briefing and tour held on board the Pride of Michigan on August 14, 2001.

Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce • U.S. Geological Survey’s Great Lakes Science Center • Great Lakes Commission • Great Lakes Fishery Commission • U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Interior • Michigan Sea Grant • U.S. Coast Guard, Department of Transportation • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • Greater Detroit American Heritage River Initiative • Detroit-Wayne County Port Authority
Federal Elected Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senator Debby Stabenow • Representative from Senator Levin’s Office • Representative from Congressman Dingell’s Office • Representative from Congressman Bonior’s Office • Representative from Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick’s Office
Local Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayors, Supervisors, and Councilpersons from communities along the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair
Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professors from University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Oakland University

Table 2. Agenda for Congressional Briefing and Tour, August 14, 2001.

9-9:30 AM	Arrive at the Wyandotte Yacht Club, 4685 West Jefferson, Ecorse, MI
9:30-9:45 AM	Continental Breakfast
9:45-10:00 AM	Welcome from Senator Stabenow
10:00-10:15 AM	Comments from Dr. John Hartig, American Heritage River Navigator -- American Heritage River update, State of the River and International Association for Great Lakes Research Survey
10:15-10:30 AM	Doug Spencer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Refuge Manager -- Establishment of the refuge, contamination and cleanup efforts in the refuge
10:30-10:45 AM	Gary Gulezian, U.S. EPA GLNPO Director -- agency overview, Baltic ballast water collaboration, contaminated sediment, mass balance frameworks
10:45-11:00 AM	Col. Polo, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers -- agency overview, Detroit River Shoreline, bridge to bridge masterplan, lake level forecasting, and Belle Isle erosion project
11:00-11:15 AM	Dr. Bruce Manny, U.S. Geological Survey -- Midwest Natural Resources Group update, sturgeon update and its significance
11:15-11:30 AM	Lt. Commander Bryan Hall, U.S. Coast Guard -- enforcement on the river, impact of water levels when conducting search and rescue
11:30-11:45 AM	Dr. David Reid, NOAA, Water Quality Specialist -- ballast water collection and sampling study report
11:45-noon	John Jamian, Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority -- ballast water releases, legislative efforts and local experience
Noon-12:25 PM	Roundtable comments, questions and answers from invitees
12:25-12:30 PM	Closing comments from Senator Stabenow
12:30-1:00 PM	Passenger changeover
1:00 PM	Depart from U.S. Coast Guard Group Detroit, 110 Mt. Elliot Avenue Detroit, MI
1:00-1:15 PM	Lunch
1:15-1:30 PM	Welcome from Senator Stabenow
1:30-1:40 PM	Captain Steve Garrity, U.S. Coast Guard, Commanding Officer, Marine Safety Office Detroit -- emergency response plan
1:40-1:50 PM	Cynthia Sellinger, NOAA Hydrologist -- impact of low lake levels
1:50-2:00 PM	Tom Edsall, U.S. Geological Survey's Great Lakes Science Center -- state of Lake St. Clair
2:00-2:10 PM	Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission, Environmental Quality Manager for Lake St. Clair
2:10-2:20 PM	Chuck Krueger, Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, Science Director -- sea lamprey control
2:20-2:30 PM	Craig Czarnecki, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Regional Manager
2:30-2:40 PM	Steve Stewart, Michigan Sea Grant -- environmental education project
2:40-2:50 PM	Dr. Guy Meadows, University of Michigan, College of Engineering,

	Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering -- progress report an environmental monitoring network
2:50-3:00 PM	Dr. Doug Hunter, Oakland University Biologist -- Sea Cadets Zebra Mussel Research project
3:00-3:10 PM	Sea Cadet Demonstration -- underwater camera sampling
3:10-3:20 PM	Doug Martz, Chairman Lake St. Clair Water Quality Board -- findings of Blue Ribbon Commission and their implementation
3:20-3:45 PM	Roundtable comments, questions and answers from invitees
3:45-3:50 PM	Senator Stabenow -- closing comments
4:00-4:30 PM	Disembark

FEEDBACK AND SURVEY RESPONSES

At the end of both the morning and afternoon sessions, a survey was given to each elected official and policy makers to obtain feedback on the usefulness of the congressional briefing and boat tour, and to obtain suggestions for how to strengthen the Great Lakes science-policy linkage in the future. The survey was initiated and conducted by the International Association for Great Lakes Research. The International Association for Great Lakes Research (IAGLR) is a scientific organization made up of over 900 researchers studying the Laurentian Great Lakes and other large lakes of the world, as well as those with an interest in such research. Specifically, the Association:

- promotes all aspects of large lakes research; and
- communicates research findings through publications and meetings.

As part of its current five-year plan (1998-2003), the International Association for Great Lakes Research has a major initiative underway through a grant from The Joyce Foundation to improve communication between Great Lakes scientists and policy makers. More information on the International Association for Great Lakes Research and its project is available online at: <http://www.iaglr.org/index.html>

All verbal comments received regarding the congressional briefing and boat tour were very positive. One common comment was that this congressional briefing and boat tour should become an annual event. Communication of current and timely scientific and research results to key policy makers is essential. It was noted that the briefing material and fact sheets distributed at the congressional briefing and boat tour were valuable (see Appendix 1 for examples of fact sheets). Participants appreciated concise information that was clearly communicated in understandable terms.

All survey responses from the elected officials and their staff were very positive (Table 3). One common suggestion for improvement was to next time include state elected officials and key representatives from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Additionally, experts from nongovernmental organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Friends of Detroit River, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and others have much to offer in strengthening the Great Lakes science-policy linkage. Perhaps another congressional briefing could occur at one of the annual or semi-annual Great Lakes meetings where many key people are in

Table 3. Policy makers survey conducted on August 14, 2001 regarding the usefulness of the science-policy exchange.

WAS THIS SCIENTIFIC BRIEFING SESSION WORTHWHILE AND VALUABLE TO YOU?

- Very much so
- This briefing session greatly increased my knowledge of Great Lakes and Detroit River water quality issues
- Yes
- Yes, excellent exchange of information
- Yes
- The briefing was worthwhile
- Top rate! I think the invitees gave considered, technical information that will be helpful in making informed decisions on legislation.
- Yes, It was great to discuss issues of mutual concern in an open format.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND DOING IT AGAIN?

- Yes
- I would strongly recommend doing this education session again
- Yes – annually!
- Yes, dialogues like this with elected officials are extremely important to get support for and understanding of environmental improvement efforts.
- Yes and often!
- Yes, I would participate again. I would suggest including state water quality officials as well in order to make sure we prioritize the issues. There was a large discussion about invader species, ballast water, etc. Is this threat commensurate with time spent on this issue? Sanitary sewer overflows is also a major issue, but time was spent discussing it. Are there federal or state experts who could weigh these issues based on the threat to the lakes so that we could focus on the most important issues?
- Yes, more often. Every quarter?
- Yes with out a doubt

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR GREAT LAKES RESEARCH IS INTERESTED IN STRENGTHENING THE SCIENCE-POLICY LINKAGE FOR THE GREAT LAKES. WHAT SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR STRENGTHENING THE SCIENCE-POLICY LINKAGE FOR THE GREAT LAKES IN THE FUTURE?

- Meetings like this are helpful. Bringing together the full delegations of Federal Representatives, Senators, and agencies for such briefings is valuable, but follow-through is important. Staff should be assigned to follow-champion the progress. Additionally, the venue is ideal to impress upon attendees the resources and values at stake.

- Additional sessions would prove to be invaluable to me and my district
- Research and policy makers need to gather at least once a year together to interact and come out with the best management practices.
- No specific suggestions
- We need more and more input from any and all agencies – federal, state, and local – and private industry in order to arrive at a cohesive and plan to achieve our goals.
- I believe that additional briefings or joint sessions involving all levels of government would be useful.
- We need open discussions with different sciences (scientists from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey). We need to include grassroots organizations like Friends of Detroit River, Friends of the Rouge, Friends of Belle Isle, Steelheaders, Ducks Unlimited, and Michigan United Conservation Clubs. Legislatures need to be educated about the science as well as the private sector use. The goby issue means one thing to a benthic community and another to an angler. We should do this with state legislators too!
- We need more integration of ideas concerning various government programs and the support they can provide

attendance (e.g., meetings hosted by the Great Lakes Commission, Council of Great Lakes Governors, Northeast Midwest Institute, International Joint Commission, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, International Association for Great Lakes Research). It was also suggested that there should be follow-up on the discussions on recommended actions by staff of the elected officials and federal and state agencies to ensure timely management actions. Perhaps at the next congressional briefing staff could generate a short list of action items with specific responsibilities for follow-up.

One other suggestion received was to focus on fewer issues and allow for more in-depth discussion. For example, it was suggested that focus of the next congressional briefing might be on exotic species from ballast water. Many participants identified exotic species as a very timely and relevant issue. One way of addressing exotic species from ballast water would be to get expert scientists/researchers and some key program managers to prepare a succinct synthesis of the recent research and science regarding exotic species from ballast water (i.e., What do we know? What do we not know? What are the recent experiences with treatment and control, and how effective have they been? What scientific and engineering advice can we provide to policy makers?). This succinct synthesis should probably be 5-10 pages long, clearly communicated, and easily understood. The idea is to synthesize the science and engineering, and translate it in an understandable fashion for a timely discussion with senior policy makers. The target audience for this synthesis document would be senior elected officials from federal, provincial, and state governments, and other senior policy advisors and makers. This synthesis document could then be distributed in advance of the next congressional briefing to help prepare elected officials and other policy makers for discussions. The expert scientists/researchers and some key program managers would then present a brief

summary of the current state of knowledge relative to the science and management of exotic species from ballast water at the congressional briefing and would be available to enter into a major discussion with the elected officials and key policy makers. This would also allow for reaching agreement on a short list of action items with specific responsibilities for follow-up. Although this suggestion of preparing an easily-understood, scientific synthesis was made for the exotic species issue, the suggestion of preparing an easily-understood, scientific synthesis would also apply to other timely Great Lakes issues as well.

Finally, it was suggested that additional congressional briefings and science-policy dialogues must have a lead champion from both the elected official community and the scientific community. For current scientific knowledge to be translated for elected officials and other key policy makers, and for continued improvement in effective Great Lakes policy development based on sound science, more partnerships will be needed between elected officials and scientific organizations like government research laboratories, universities, international organizations like Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the International Joint Commission, professional societies like the International Association for Great Lakes Research, and others.



"As one of the world's greatest natural treasures, with one-fifth of its freshwater supply, the Great Lakes deserve nothing less than long-term protection from shortsighted exploitation. To achieve this worthy goal, we need to strengthen the linkage between science and policy in order to better manage and protect all of the Great Lakes. I am personally committed to this goal and will continue to promote actions to protect and sustain the quality and integrity of these natural wonders."

Senator Debbie Stabenow