

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) voted to support new research projects that will help address the problem of harmful algae blooms. The bill, which was approved overwhelmingly, authorizes \$41 million annually to research the harmful effects of algal blooms, which affect waterways across the United States, including the Great Lakes.

“The Great Lakes represent 20 percent of the world’s fresh water supply, and are critical to the economies of Niagara Falls, Buffalo, and Rochester,” said Slaughter. “Our beaches are often closed when algae accumulates and decays causing bacteria growth and foul odors. This legislation will help us address this problem so that families can safely use our beaches and our communities can better leverage this natural resource.”

Harmful algal blooms and hypoxia cost the American seafood and tourism industries alone approximately \$82 million annually, up from \$50 million in 2004. The Act reauthorizes funding for research into the causes and potential solutions for the blooms, and creates a National Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Program to reduce the effects of the problem.

In Rochester, these types of efforts will be critical in helping to address and eliminate the overabundance of algae that decays and accumulates in Charlotte at Ontario Beach Park. Algae is a persistent problem in Lake Ontario, and particularly at Monroe County’s primary public beach in Charlotte. Often the high levels of decaying algae and associated bacterial growth cause the County Health Department to have to close the beach to swimmers, shortening the already brief swimming season. Moreover the odor produced by the algae is an impediment to increased recreational and commercial development in the waterfront area. Often families are less likely to attend summer concerts, have family picnics, or enjoy recreational activities like beach volleyball leagues because of the foul odors produced when the algae accumulates and decays.

In Buffalo, SUNY Buffalo has already participated in research of the blooms’ effect on the Great Lakes, where they have been responsible for the closure of beaches, death of wildlife and contamination of drinking water supplies.

Slaughter is a co-chair of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force. On March 5, Slaughter introduced H.R. 4755 the Great Lakes Ecosystem Protection Act. This bipartisan legislation will

build upon President Obama's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative by authorizing an annual funding level of \$475 million for FY10-FY14. The legislation aims to address the following areas of concern to Great Lakes health: toxic substances, invasive species, near source health, nonpoint source pollution, habitat restoration, and wildlife preservation.

Her legislation was introduced in conjunction with her fellow co-chairs Reps. Vernon J. Ehlers, (D-MI), John Dingell (D-MI), and Mark Kirk (R-IL). It already has support in the Senate.