

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) and Congressman Bill Owens (NY-23) announced that their plan to create a \$5 million Niagara River Navigation Fund had won approval from a key subcommittee, making it more likely that funds to help maintain and dredge harbors across Lake Ontario will be available soon.

The project is a joint effort that will have an immediate impact on commercial and recreational boaters across 13 harbors, boosting the regional economy and assisting commercial and sport fisherman.

“The Great Lakes are a national treasure and the maintenance to harbors along Lake Ontario are vital to the health of the harbors and local economies up and down our coast,” said Slaughter who is a Co-Chair of the Great Lakes Task Force. “My office has heard from boaters from Wilson and Olcott to Orleans County and Rochester who are concerned that infrequent dredging of Lake Ontario’s federal harbors poses a security concern which is why I understand that we must ensure that commercial and recreational boaters can safely enjoy the Lakes.”

Funds would be used to dredge, maintain, and conduct the structural repair in the harbors of Olcott, Irondequoit, Great Sodus Bay, Little Sodus Bay, Wilson, Oak Orchard, Oswego, Rochester, Cape Vincent, Morristown, Port Ontario, Ogdensburg, Sackets Harbor and Little River Harbor in the State of New York. Lack of maintenance in these harbors will result in negative economic impacts as well as major safety problems for all users.

“These harbors generate millions of dollars in economic activity, and maintaining them through a dedicated fund will help to drive even more commercial and tourism dollars to our community and create jobs in our area.” said Owens. “The low levels of Lake Ontario make better maintenance and dredging critical to the safety of all those who use these harbors.”

The lack of dredging and maintenance of navigation structures combined with recent low lake levels on Lake Ontario can present serious concerns and safety problems. There have been

many reports of damage to both the U.S Army Corps of Engineers and congressional offices during the summer months making this funding vital to ensure the safety of those who use these harbors.

Now that the subcommittee has approved funding, it must also be approved by the full committee before it can be brought to the House floor for a vote. Once the bill is passed in the House, it must be then be approved by the Senate before it can be considered by the president.

As a Co-Chair of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force, a bipartisan and bicameral group of lawmakers in Congress, Slaughter is a strong advocate for the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes. Most recently she wrote to President Obama and other administration officials demanding greater action to keep Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes.