Part Two

Oct 12, 2023

EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan joins Senator Tammy Baldwin in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to announce the largest cleanup project to ever be implemented under EPA’s Great Lakes Restoration

Unidentified speaker: from Milwaukee stored industrial history will help improve and protect water quality and drinking our drinking water sources, rebuild, and protect the fishery,

and improve the economic and recreational opportunities in this area. By formalizing our partnership and reaffirming our commitment we will advance this work in ways that none of us could have done individually, none of us could have done alone. Nearly a half billion dollars to complete this monumental project will be contributed by the partners that stand before us today including significant Investments by the federal government, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage, District, State, local government private businesses and nonprofit organizations. Thanks to the EPA, the city of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District additional project partners and the many important local allies for the years of collaboration and substantial investment of time that has made this project come to reality. The governor always talks about connecting the dots building trust in relationships and everyone in this room has been a part of that. You have made such an impact already and this is going to make such an impact in our state and region, and I know from firsthand experience how important this is. It's near and dear to my heart. Having served as (inaudible) County Administrator for 24 years just up the road. About ten to 15 years ago we worked with a similar group of local state public private partners and cleaned up the Sheboygan River and Harbor and I can recall how difficult it was for us and I see so many of those people in the room today that helped make that happen. Every time there was a barrier we dug deep, we persevered, we overcome obstacles and we got it done and within three years of the clean up the Sheboygan River and Harbor over $30 million of new investment this place is just going to continue to grow and prosper thanks to your leadership. So, thank you. It's such an honor to be here today and celebrate this milestone and with that I'd like to pass it over to our next speaker Demetria Smith Chair of the Community Advisory Committee on the Milwaukee area of concern.

Demetria Smith: Good morning, everyone quite a bit shorter than the other so I'm honored to serve as the chair of our AOC's Community Advisory Committee and one of my favorite pieces of this work is when I'm talking to folks about this once in a-lifetime cleanup effort. I feel like I often get there this moment in the conversation where people are waiting for the other shoe to drop they're waiting for me to say like well what's the problem what's the catch and I understand because so much of the news about our waterways is bad news and it's a thrill to be able to deliver the message like no this is all spectacular it's all awesome we're cleaning this whole thing up and I think one of the reasons that I can extend an invitation to people to you know really participate in the process is because the Milwaukee community has really recognized this opportunity to not only to clean up our waterways but also to strengthen the fabric of our community in the process by providing really intentional Pathways to public

participation in the process we have so much cross-sector collaboration here. The Innovative structure for the CAC was actually , is actually a collaboration between government agencies residents philanthropy and nonprofit organizations and it's really awesome to see how we are going to be able to really I think about how we can correct some of the mistakes around excluding people that we've had in the past and think about how we bring everyone into this conversation I think like all of us here I am so grateful to EPA for this investment. I'm looking forward to our you know cleaner waterways, restored ecosystems and also looking forward to an engaged community who is able to participate every step of the way. So, with that I'd love to introduce U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin.

Senator Baldwin: Thank you Demetria and good morning, everybody It is such a delight.

to join you here and I'm so pleased to welcome Administrator Regan back to Milwaukee. As you've heard it's not the first time that Administrator Regan has been in town to highlight the impact of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law on this community. Earlier this year we were talking about how the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Investments are helping communities across Wisconsin clean up former industrial sites commonly known as brownfields so that they can be used to build more affordable housing, expand access to green spaces or allow more in Wisconsin businesses to open up shop. Before that Administrator Regan stopped by with the Vice President to talk about how our Infrastructure Law is accelerating the removal of lead piped laterals so that Milwaukee families can turn on their faucets and be confident that their water is safe and clean. And now we're here to talk about yet another investment from the Infrastructure Law that is being made in this community. One that will protect one of Milwaukee's most valuable assets Lake Michigan. The Great Lakes hold 90% of North America's fresh surface water and they provide clean drinking water to over 40 million people and Lake Michigan attracts visitors to Wisconsin from (inaudible) all the way up to Marinette who come to marvel at our freshwater sea that carries goods from our farms and factories to destinations literally around the globe but many of our precious freshwater resources and shorelines are suffering. They're suffering from the legacy of pollution that puts our ecosystem our economy and our way of life at risk and that includes the Milwaukee Estuary. I have been fighting at the federal level to clean up the Milwaukee Estuary for nearly a decade. Delivering solutions for restoring the Burnham Canal to a wetland starting all the way back in 2014. Some might say I was fighting for clean water before it was fashionable. Since that time, I have been proud to be a leading voice advocating to address these areas of concern around Wisconsin and securing funding for the Great Lakes restoration initiative. Now the Great Lakes restoration initiative has been transformational in our fight to protect and restore our greatest freshwater resources and this is a result of the many hardworking Wisconsin partners of the program that are ensuring that the fish are safe to eat, our water is safe for recreation and drinking and so so much more and by all metrics the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been wildly successful. Since its inception the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has tripled the successful cleanup efforts and the delisting of areas of concern while reducing the presence of chemicals and compounds and contaminants and restoring wildlife habitat to over a thousand miles of rivers and waterways. In fact, one independent economic study found that for every dollar the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative invests it produces an additional $335 of economic activity. I have been so proud to lead the legislation to reauthorize the program and to successfully advocate for its funding and I might even add increased funding over the years. I'm also proud to be the one Senator from Wisconsin to support the single biggest investment to address Wisconsin's four areas of concern and that is by supporting the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law last year. President Biden announced that one billion dollars of infrastructure funding would be dedicated to addressing the remaining 25 areas of concern in the Great Lakes including the four in Wisconsin which are Sheboygan, Green Bay, Superior and the Estuary. Right here in Milwaukee. Cleaning up these areas of concern will deliver economic health and recreational benefits for the communities on the shores of Michigan and Superior while preserving our freshwater resources and protecting habitats for Wisconsin wildlife. And today I am pleased to announce that we are taking a major step forward in restoring the Milwaukee Estuary. Together the EPA, the state of Wisconsin, the City of Milwaukee are announcing a $450 million investment, including $275 million in infrastructure funding and I am so proud to be a partner in helping deliver these funds to finally remove Milwaukee's Estuary as an area of concern and to accomplish all of this Wisconsinites will be at the job. The project which brings together federal state and local Partners perfectly demonstrates our shared understanding that protecting the health of our water is vital to the future of Milwaukee this is an investment in preserving Wisconsin's waterways and this is an investment in a cleaner environment for the next generation and this is an investment in our Wisconsin economy. So, I want to again thank Administrator Regan and President Biden for continuing to show up for Wisconsin Administrator Regan as I said, this is not your first stop here in Milwaukee and I hope it won't be your last. As we continue to deliver Federal resources that will make a difference in the lives of Wisconsin families, I am so proud to support this project to restore and protect Wisconsin's fresh coasts and I look forward to continuing to work with these project Partners to get the job done for the people of Milwaukee. Now I am pleased to introduce someone who I know cares deeply about protecting our freshwater ecosystems here in Milwaukee and really across the whole Great Lakes Region. I'm confident their passion for educating the Next Generation about the importance of protecting these habitats will continue to make a difference for years to come. Please welcome Pierce Van Valkenberg .

Ms. Van Valkenberg: Thank you senator for your kind remarks. For my day job I am a project

manager for the Great Lakes and St Lawrence Cities Initiative. I connect Great Lakes Mayors with solutions to coastal issues like flooding and erosion, but I believe that work is truly only effective with an effort to inspire today's youth to become tomorrow's freshwater stewards. So when I'm not on the research vessel (inaudible) or in discussion (inaudible) I have a unique side gig. I am a professional mermaid, it's true. We use this character to educate kids about freshwater challenges and to inspire them to take action because everyone from kindergarteners to government officials deserve to enjoy the great lakes. That's why I'm especially excited to see policy advancement like what we are gathered here today to celebrate that ensures the protection of our Great Lakes for generations to come. Now Administrator Regan you have taken your oath of office with Vice President Harris at the White House, but have you ever taken the mermaid promise? Probably not. It is a pledge I share with every child I work with so I thought I would carry the tradition forward to the United States EPA and everyone in this room. All right so let's all raise our right hands and repeat after me, we're politicians we can be confident, I promise yes from my head to my tail, from my head to my tail to protect water creatures, each and every scale. I can make a difference just by being me just by being me to preserve the Great Lakes to preserve the Michigan, Superior, Ontario, Huron and Erie Michigan, Superior we'll work on it very good Administrator Michael Regan is the 16th Administrator of the EPA and has dedicated his career to consensus building, fostering dialogue, respecting science and the law and understanding the interconnectedness of Environmental Protection and economic prosperity. Please welcome to the podium Administrator Regan United States Environmental Protection Agency. Michael Regan (Applause)

Administrator Regan: Wow that's a hard you know Pierce if I had known I was going to meet a professional mermaid I would have dressed appropriately. Please Senator Baldwin thank you so much. So good to see you again. Thank you for inviting me back and thank you for your leadership. You know we would not be here but for the leadership of Senator Baldwin and President Biden. We have historic resources thanks to their great efforts, and you know Senator Ballwin has made it her mission to strengthen the made in Wisconsin economy which doesn't conflict at all with investing in America so thank you for that leadership. Cavalier Johnson thank you for the invitation back. You know Mayor, I told you before I will always follow the money so as long as you all are putting up resources to match our resources I'll continue to come back. And thank you to all of the state and local leaders. I really appreciate your leadership but more.

importantly your partnership. We would not be here but for this strong collaboration. I'd also like to give a special shout out to all the students here from the University of Wisconsin, the School of Freshwater Sciences. You know young people are leading the charge for cleaner more just future and you know we would not be here without the energy and the push and the vision of our young people. I travel all across the country all across the world and trust me our young people are holding our feet to the fire. Thank you to our host today the wonderful team here at Discovery World, a museum that has been educating young people on the importance of our Great Lakes for year. We appreciate all that you do. Our Great Lakes supply drinking water for more than 40 million people, support regional economies, provide an abundant recreational opportunity, and sustain life for thousands of species. These lakes aren't just a national treasure they're an economic engine for so many communities and President Biden has made investing in our nation's waters and water infrastructure a cornerstone of his Investing in America Agenda. Thanks to his leadership again along with leadership of our Congressional partners like Senator Baldwin, we have already made the single largest investment in water infrastructure in United States history. Through just last year as the Senator mentioned (inaudible) over1 billion dollars, that's billion wth a “b” of resources to accelerate the ecological restoration and sustainable management of the Great Lakes. While we've already made tremendous progress, there is absolutely more work that needs to be done. Today there are still 25 us sites throughout the Great Lakes Basin that remain areas of concern because they continue to suffer from harmful legacy pollution. The contamination left over from an era when this nation had not yet begun to take Environmental Protection seriously and for many areas throughout the Great Lakes including here in Milwaukee these historical industrial discharges have left a disastrous aftermath. These areas of concern have been polluted for years and many of the neighborhoods surrounding these areas and the people who live in them often low-income communities or communities of color have been left behind and born a disproportionate impact. The Milwaukee Estuary has long been identified as one of the most polluted areas in the country cleanup and restoration of the Milwaukee Estuary is essential to the health of the surrounding communities the Vitality of Lake Michigan and the strength of local economies. So today I am thrilled to announce as Senator Baldwin has said more than 450 million dollars for the Milwaukee Estuary area of concern sediment remediation project (Applause). Now we not doing this alone and this is in partnership with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District, We Energies, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the City of Milwaukee, and Milwaukee County Parks. Every level of government growing in the same direction. The project agreement reflects joint funding between EPA and these five Federal, in these five non-federal sponsors who will also contribute over $170 million to the cleanup with more Than $275 million coming from EPA and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Without their critical participation this project would not be possible, and we are truly grateful for the state local and federal partnership. This is the largest cleanup project ever under EPA’s Great Lake Restoration Initiative up approximately 2 million. I believe we're going to take a few questions to the people sit on the front, (Applause)

Inaudible: Someone contaminated sediments that are at the bottom of the Estuary we (inaudible) are in design final design for a facility that will those materials once they're dredged and we will start construction on that next spring that will take two years. (End)