THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST COALITION

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

November 17, 2006

Admiral Thad W. Allen
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
2100 Second Street, SW
Washington, DC 20593

Dear Admiral Allen:

As representatives from the Great Lakes region, we are writing to express our concerns over the Coast Guard's proposal to conduct live fire testing throughout the Great Lakes. We urge you to consider options to ensure the safety and to reduce the impact that training exercises might have on existing recreational and commercial users of the lakes.

The Great Lakes basin is home to more than one-tenth the population of the United States, and approximately 40 million people rely on the Great Lakes for their drinking water. The eight Great Lakes states have approximately 3.7 million registered recreational boats, one-third of the nation's total, and sport fishing generates more than $4 billion in regional economic activity. Therefore, the Great Lakes are an important natural resource for the region, which we want to protect.

After the initial proposal on August 1, 2006 caught the region by surprise, we appreciate that the Coast Guard has been willing to hold a series of public hearings throughout the region. We strongly encourage you to carefully consider the comments that were made at the hearings and the written testimony and make appropriate changes to your proposal. We have heard from constituents that the proposed test fire zones are located in ferry routes and popular fishing locations, that many boaters who do not use marine radios would not receive warnings, that city and state officials will not have advance notice, and that the there would be a long-term impact from the addition of lead into the water.

Because of the importance of the Great Lakes, we urge you to reconsider your proposal in order to determine whether there are options to reduce the potential conflicts between Great Lakes users and the Coast Guard. We appreciate your consideration of this matter and would like to meet with the Coast Guard again as you move forward with a live fire testing proposal.

Sincerely,

Carl Levin
United States Senator

Mark Steven Kirk
Member of Congress

Vernon J. Ehlers
Member of Congress

Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress

Melissa L. Bean
Member of Congress

Peter J. Visclosky
Member of Congress

Dale E. Kildee
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Ralph Regula
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress