



The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and  
Related agencies  
531 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and  
Related Agencies  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,  
and Related Agencies  
506 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science  
and Related Agencies  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Room 521  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Merkley, Ranking Member Murkowski, Chair Shaheen, and Ranking Member Moran, Restore America's Estuaries (RAE), the Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP), and the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association (NERRA) request your support to ensure that the key federal programs listed below receive the full proposed funding in the President's budget. These programs allow local organizations, such as National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Estuary Programs, and RAE member organizations, to continue implementing on-the-ground restoration that fits local needs and provide jobs for local communities. Additionally, these federal investments are often matched by 300-500% by non-federal dollars and in-kind donations.

America's coastal communities stand to lose the most in the face of rising seas, increased storm volatility, and water quality degradation. More than 40% of America's population lives along estuaries and more than 40% of our nation's economy occurs along our coasts. Additionally, 60% of our country's commercial fish harvest comes from America's estuaries. To keep pace with the increased damage caused by natural and unnatural disasters, we must continue to increase investments in key programs and agency funding that encourage nature-based infrastructure solutions to meet the challenge. These investments are critical for ensuring national security at our coastal ports and military installations, continued economic excellence, and protecting cultural traditions such as hunting and fishing.

#### **National Estuary Program**

- Authorize the full \$50 million for the National Estuary Program
- Provide \$1 million for each of the 28 National Estuary Programs
- Fund innovative, targeted competitive awards program at least \$7.5 million

#### **National Estuarine Research Reserves**

- Authorize \$42.5 million for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System Operations
- Authorize \$10 million for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System PAC

**NOAA Marine Fisheries, Office of Habitat, Community Based Restoration Program (CBRP)**

- Authorize at least \$99 million in funding for the NOAA Marine Fisheries, Office of Habitat Conservation and Restoration
- Provide \$35 million in funding for the CBRP, creating competitive grant programs for on-the-ground organizations to carry out regionally sensible habitat restoration in their communities

**EPA Geographic Water Program**

- Authorize \$578 million to protect and restore treasured geographic estuary regions, including the Chesapeake Bay, Puget Sound, San Francisco Bay, and the Gulf of Mexico

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program**

- Authorize \$15.6 million for the Coastal Program to improve habitat for fish and wildlife in estuarine ecosystems

We would also like to thank the Co-Chairs of the Congressional Estuary Caucus for their bipartisan leadership on critical legislation related to coastal issues. Representatives Posey, Larsen, Bonamici and Mast have supported and led on bills including The *Blue Carbon for our Planet Act*, *Coastal and Ocean Acidification Stressors and Threats Research Act*, and the *National Estuaries and Acidification Research Act*. These visionary bills will provide necessary funding and resources for the protection and restoration of our estuarine ecosystems.

Signed,



Rebecca Roth  
Executive Director  
NERRA



Daniel Hayden  
President & CEO  
RAE



Rich Innes  
Senior Policy Director  
ANEP