

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 12, 2008

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks, Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We appreciate your continued support of the National Estuary Program (NEP). In FY08 Congress funded the NEP at \$27.2 million overall and directed that \$16.8 million of that amount, the equivalent of \$600,000 for each of the 28 NEPs, be directed to these programs in the field. We are writing to request that you continue to invest directly in the stewardship of our nation's coasts by ensuring that, of funds appropriated for FY09, each of the 28 NEPs continues to receive at least \$600,000.

In 1987, Congress created the NEP to restore designated estuaries of national significance. There are twenty-eight estuaries in the NEP, all of which are implementing their Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs). More than forty-two percent of the continental U.S. shoreline is included in the NEP, and fifteen percent of all Americans live within NEP designated watersheds, with thousands of new residents arriving every year. In the United States, estuaries provide habitat for more than seventy-five percent of America's commercial fish catch, and eighty to ninety percent of the recreational fish catch. Estuarine-dependent fisheries are among the most valuable, with an estimated worth of \$1.9 billion nationwide.

These NEPs, which last year celebrated their 20th anniversary, are the front lines in restoring and protecting some of our most threatened and economically vital bays and estuaries. By ensuring these funds are directed to the individual NEPs, you are investing funds that are highly leveraged to achieve results in the communities along our coasts.

The urgency of restoring and protecting our coasts and estuaries has never been greater. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, a collaborative effort between the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (USCOP) and the Pew Ocean Commission, underscores the widespread agreement that our oceans and marine resources are in serious trouble. The U.S. Ocean Action Plan to implement the USCOP recommendations placed significant emphasis on managing our coasts and their watersheds. And the Administration has noted that "the NEP is EPA's flagship watershed protection effort. The NEP provides inclusive, community-based planning and action at the watershed level and has an established record of improvements to ecosystem conditions."

We believe the NEPs should continue to receive at least \$600,000 each in order to continue ongoing work to implement their CCMPs and to ensure the restoration and protection of our nation's estuaries.

We look forward to working with you to realize a strong and successful National Estuary Program. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,


ELLEN O. TAUSCHER


JIM SAXTON

Tom Allen
THOMAS H. ALLEN

Brian Baird
BRIAN BAIRD

Howard L. Berman
HOWARD L. BERMAN

Earl Blumenauer
EARL BLUMENAUER

Vern Buchanan
VERN BUCHANAN

Lois Capps
LOIS CAPPS

Mike Castle
MICHAEL N. CASTLE

Kathy Castor
KATHY CASTOR

Elijah E. Cummings
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS

Bill Delahunt
WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

Rosa L. DeLauro
ROSA L. DELAURO

Anna G. Eshoo
ANNA G. ESHOO

Mike Ferguson
MIKE FERGUSON

Barney Frank
BARNEY FRANK

Luis G. Fortuño
LUIS G. FORTUÑO

Jim Gerlach
JIM GERLACH

Wayne T. Gilchrest
WAYNE T. GILCHREST

Patrick J. Kennedy
PATRICK J. KENNEDY

Dennis J. Kucinich
DENNIS J. KUCINICH

Jane Harman
JANE HARMAN

Alcee L. Hastings
ALCEE L. HASTINGS

Rubén Hinojosa
RUBÉN HINOJOSA

Paul W. Hodes
PAUL W. HODES

Darlene Hooley
DARLENE HOOLEY

James R. Langevin
JAMES R. LANGEVIN

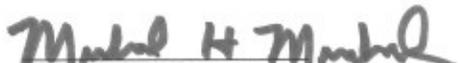
Frank A. Lobiondo
FRANK A. LOBIONDO

Stephen F. Lynch
STEPHEN F. LYNCH

Jim McDermott
JIM MCDERMOTT

Jerry McNerney
JERRY MCNERNEY

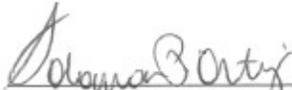
Charlie Melancon
CHARLIE MELANCON


MICHAEL H. MICHAUD


BRAD MILLER


GEORGE MILLER


JERROLD NADLER


SOLOMON P. ORTIZ


DONALD M. PAYNE


DAVID E. PRICE


JOHN P. SARBANES

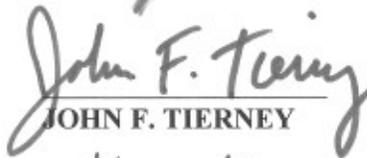

ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ


CAROL SHEA-PORTER


CHRISTOPHER SHAYS


ALBIO SIRES


CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH


JOHN F. TIERNEY


HENRY A. WAXMAN


DAVID WU


GENE GREEN