



Albemarle-Pamlico Sound • Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin • Chesapeake Bay
Coastal Louisiana • Colorado River • Delaware River • Everglades • Galveston Bay • Great Lakes
Gulf of Maine • Lake Champlain • Long Island Sound • Mississippi River • Missouri River
Narragansett Bay • New York/New Jersey Harbor and Hudson Estuary • Ohio River
Puget Sound • Rio Grande • San Francisco Bay • St. Johns River

March 23, 2015

The Honorable John Culberson, Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
H-309 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4610

The Honorable Chaka Fattah, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3802

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Fattah:

We express our strong support for the Committee's dedication to the restoration of America's Great Waters. As the Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations bills are developed, we respectfully urge you to maintain strong funding for programs that enable important work to restore landscapes like those in and around the America's 21 Great Waters¹. Places like these are not only valuable ecological resources, but are also significant economic drivers for large swaths of the nation, providing much-needed jobs and opportunities for untold numbers of Americans. As you make difficult decisions regarding funding, we want to highlight the solid return on taxpayer investments in Great Waters restoration.

Specifically, we encourage you to maintain robust funding for restoration programs, including but not limited to:

- NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program, which engages citizens to implement on-the-ground restoration activities.
- The Estuary Restoration Program, a comprehensive interagency program that focuses on the restoration of the nation's estuaries and administers the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council, of which NOAA is a member.

After decades of neglect, America's Great Waters need your continued support. With adequate funding, we can sustain progress toward restoration goals including promoting human health, a cleaner environment and a stronger economy. Restoration of our coasts and estuaries involves on-the-ground work, requiring skills and machinery available in the local workforce that provide many benefits to local economies. According to Restore America's Estuaries, restoring our coasts can create more than 30 jobs for every million dollars invested, which is more than twice as many jobs as the oil and gas and road construction industries combined. Along the Mississippi River, estimates show that more than 50 habitat restoration projects contribute approximately \$16.5 million to small businesses and employ more than 300 people in rural counties where, so often, unemployment is the highest following the closure of factories and other industries along the river. A recent report by the Chesapeake Bay

¹ America's Great Waters Coalition recognizes 21 Great Waters based on specific criteria. These waters are the Albemarle-Pamlico Sound, Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin, Chesapeake Bay, Coastal Louisiana, Colorado River, Delaware River, Everglades, Galveston Bay, Great Lakes, Gulf of Maine, Lake Champlain, Long Island Sound, Mississippi River, Missouri River, Narragansett Bay, New York/New Jersey Harbor and Hudson Estuary, Ohio River, Puget Sound, Rio Grande, San Francisco Bay, and St. Johns River.

Foundation found that economic benefits provided by nature in the Chesapeake watershed will total \$130 billion annually, an increase of \$22 billion annually, when the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint is fully implemented. A study conducted by Mather Economics found that for every \$1 invested in restoring the Everglades, there is at least a \$4 return in economic benefits, and that over the next 50 years, the incremental impact of Everglades restoration is expected to produce more than 440,000 jobs. A study of the Delaware River Watershed found that it contributes \$25 billion in annual economic activity and \$21 billion in ecosystem goods and services.

At a time when federal lawmakers need to make smart spending choices, restoration offers one of the best returns on investment in the federal budget; restored watersheds improve our quality of life, increase property values, provide clean water, support fish and wildlife and enhance outdoor recreation for our families.

The America's Great Waters Coalition represents diverse national, regional, state and local organizations working to protect, preserve and restore our nation's waters. The Coalition is a result of years of work by national and local organizations to bring the broader restoration community together to "lift all boats." Together, we urge you to continue to provide the highest level of funding possible for federal programs critical for effective Great Waters restoration.

Sincerely,

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