



**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**

December 1, 2014

Shaun Donovan, Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Donovan:

We express our strong support for the Administration's dedication to the restoration of America's Great Waters. As the fiscal year 2016 budget is 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. These waterways 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:

- EPA's Geographic Programs, which include robust and successful restoration programs in the Chesapeake Bay, Lake Champlain, Great Lakes, Long Island Sound, Puget Sound and others;
- The National Estuary Program, which provides resources to restore and manage 28 estuaries across the country;
- Clean Water State Revolving Funds, providing important resources for states and municipalities to make much-needed upgrades to wastewater treatment systems;
- Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program, which is the primary means for states, territories and tribes to address nonpoint source challenges;
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' ecosystem restoration programs, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, which provides a framework for restoring the Central and Southern water resources in Florida; the Missouri River Recovery Program, the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan, and the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study to enable restoration and advance economic development on America's longest river; the Upper Mississippi River Restoration - Environmental Management Program to continue important restoration work on one of the nation's most significant navigation river systems; and the Louisiana Coastal Area Program to restore natural features and ecosystem processes to Louisiana's wetlands.

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.

- NOAA’s Community-based Restoration Program, which implements on-the-ground fishery habitat restoration activities that increase our coastal resiliency; and
- USFWS Coastal Program provides critical project design and technical assistance to partners for restoration projects benefiting listed and threatened species.

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 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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