



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

September 8, 2015

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

Dear Mr. Donovan:

As organizations working to protect and restore America's Great Waters across the country, we express our strong support for the Administration's dedication to programs that benefit the restoration of these iconic waterways. As the fiscal year 2017 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 Waters<sup>1</sup>. 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 and Drinking 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

restore natural features and ecosystem processes to Louisiana's wetlands; funding for the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Study, which combines flood protection and wetlands restoration, and continued funding for the Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Project in San Pablo Bay and the Long Term Management Strategy (LTMS) for Dredged Material.

- NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program and Regional Coastal Resilience Grant Program, which support restoration activities that increase coastal resiliency;
- USFWS Coastal Program, which provides critical project design and technical assistance to partners for restoration projects benefiting listed and threatened species; USFWS National Coastal Wetlands Grant and North American Wetlands Conservation Act programs, which provide funding to protect and restore wetland ecosystems; Joint Ventures, which bring together partners to conserve habitat; and
- USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which creates a competitive, merit-based process to target conservation funding in areas of greatest conservation need, and other Farm Bill conservation programs that support on-the-ground conservation by farmers and ranchers, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. These programs have mandatory funding, and it is critical that cuts are not made to these programs during the appropriations process.

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,

Molly M. Flanagan  
Vice President, Policy  
**Alliance for the Great Lakes**

Val Marmillion  
Managing Director  
**America's WETLAND Foundation**

Jim Bradley  
Vice President, Policy and Government  
Relations  
**American Rivers**

Rich Innes  
Executive Director  
**Association of National Estuary Programs**

Brian Moore  
Legislative Director  
**Audubon**

Tabitha Cale  
Everglades Policy Associate  
**Audubon Florida**

Erin Crotty  
Executive Director  
**Audubon New York**

Susan Testroet-Bergeron  
Director  
**Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary  
Program in Louisiana**

Jennifer Browning  
Executive Director  
**Bluestem Communications**

Stanley Pannaman  
Conservation Chair  
**The Broward Group of the Sierra Club**

Ray Judah  
CRCA Designee  
**Caloosahatchee River Citizen Association**

Alix Murdoch  
Federal Policy Director  
**Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

Kathleen E. Aterno  
Florida Director  
**Clean Water Action**

Deanna White  
State Director  
**Clean Water Action of Minnesota**

Morgan Crutcher  
Technical and Policy Analyst  
**Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana**

Jennifer Hecker  
Director of Natural Resource Policy  
**Conservancy of Southwest Florida**

Kelly Reed  
Director of Government Relations  
**The Conservation Fund**

Jean Pogge  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Delta Institute**

Dan Silver  
Executive Director  
**Endangered Habitats League**

Dr. Thomas Van Lent  
Director of Science and Policy  
**Everglades Foundation**

Mary Barley  
Chair  
**Everglades Trust**

Manley K. Fuller  
President  
**Florida Wildlife Federation**

Jill M. Ryan  
Executive Director  
**Freshwater Future**

Elinor Williams  
President  
**Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee  
National Wildlife Refuge**

Bob Stokes  
President  
**Galveston Bay Foundation**

Matt Rota  
Senior Policy Director  
**Gulf Restoration Network**

Ivan J Hack Jr  
Headwaters Chapter President  
**Headwaters Chapter, Izaak Walton League of  
America**

Laura Rubin  
Executive Director  
**Huron River Watershed Council**

Darwin Adams  
Chairman  
**Illinois Council of Trout Unlimited**

Paul Lepisto  
Regional Conservation Coordinator  
**Izaak Walton League of America**

Jill Crafton  
Chair - Great Lakes Committee  
**Izaak Walton League of America**

Al Weener  
President  
**Kalamazoo River Sturgeon for Tomorrow**

Tom FitzGerald  
Director  
**Kentucky Resources Council, Inc.**

Lori Fisher  
Executive Director  
**Lake Champlain Committee**

Captain Paul Pacholski  
President  
**Lake Erie Charter Boat Association**

Tom Fuhrman  
President  
**Lake Erie Region Conservancy**

Debrah Marriott  
Executive Director  
**Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership**

John Ruskey  
Founding Director  
**Lower Mississippi River Foundation**

John J Ropp  
President/CEO  
**Michigan Wildlife Conservancy**

Cheryl Nenn  
Riverkeeper  
**Milwaukee Riverkeeper**

Theresa Pierno  
Chief Operating Officer  
**National Parks Conservation Association**

Adam Kolton  
Vice President of Federal Policy  
**National Wildlife Federation**

Melinda Hughes-Wert  
President  
**Nature Abounds**

Kameran Onley  
Director of US Government Relations,  
Worldwide Office  
**The Nature Conservancy**

Kelly Mooij, Esq.  
Vice President, Government Relations  
**New Jersey Audubon Society**

Arthur Feinstein  
Chair, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture  
Government Affairs Committee  
**The Non-Federal Partners of the San Francisco  
Bay Joint Venture**

Rob Moir  
Executive Director  
**Ocean River Institute**

Kristy Meyer  
Managing Director, Agricultural, Health & Clean  
Water Programs  
**Ohio Environmental Council**

Rich Cogen  
Executive Director  
**Ohio River Foundation**

Ray Stewart  
President  
**Ohio Wetlands Association**

Kim Knowles  
Staff Attorney  
**Prairie Rivers Network**

Sheida Sahandy  
Executive Director  
**Puget Sound Partnership**

Jeff Benoit  
President  
**Restore America's Estuaries**

Denny Caneff  
Executive Director  
**River Alliance of Wisconsin**

Nicole Barker  
Executive Director  
**Save the Dunes**

Lee Willbanks  
Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper & Executive  
Director  
**Save the River**

Stephen Mahoney  
Conservation Chair  
**Sierra Club Miami Group**

Brett Fitzgerald  
Executive Director  
**Snook & Gamefish Foundation**

Mark Middlebrook  
Executive Director  
**St. Johns River Alliance**

Lisa Phipps  
Executive Director  
**Tillamook Estuaries Partnership**

Carol A. Stepien, Ph.D.  
Distinguished University Professor of Ecology &  
Director of the Lake Erie Center  
**University of Toledo**

Christine Crissman  
Executive Director  
**The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay**

George Meyer  
Executive Director  
**Wisconsin Wildlife Federation**