

join us in supporting our veterans and vote for the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WALTZ), an Army veteran from Florida's Sixth Congressional District.

Mr. WALTZ. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of this important legislation, H.R. 4305, the PAWS Act.

As a combat veteran, I have personally relied on service dogs in battle. We all recently witnessed the important role that service dogs play in combat roles and in national security when we saw Conan, the Belgian Malinois, who participated in the raid that killed ISIS leader al-Baghdadi. Service dogs also play an important role in transitioning veterans back to civilian life.

There is no denying these connections. The support they provide our veterans puts that connection on an entirely different level of importance. Many of our veterans return back from their service not the same as when they left, and I can personally attest to that.

They have three bad choices: either they don't come home, they come home missing limbs, or they certainly come home—when you have been in combat—different mentally than when they left.

These invisible wounds often make life very difficult for our veterans who have served. We owe them. The least we can do is to provide a full menu of options to their medical providers when they need help, whether those are medicines, whether those are unconventional treatments like hyperbaric chambers, or whether they are service dogs. That should be one of the options that our providers can provide.

I had the personal opportunity to meet with several veterans who have benefited from these service animals in my district last year and their stories were just incredible.

The common theme amongst all of them was that they either completely eliminated or drastically reduced the amount of medication that they were on as a result of PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Almost all of these veterans who had service dogs in their lives not only reduced their medications, but they got out more and they socialized more. The dog served as an important and positive forcing function in their lives.

I think this legislation is long overdue. This is long overdue for the VA to provide. I love the fact that it engages our veteran service organizations like K9s for Warriors which is just north of my district in St. Johns County, and others.

These dogs can be life changing, and they have been life changing, and they should continue to be, and they should be provided by us, by our society that owes these vets so much.

Our veterans deserve to live happy lives after their service, and we should do everything that we can to ensure their well-being. I urge my colleagues to pass this important bill.

I thank my colleagues Representative ROE and Representative STIVERS for their leadership, and we all should let them know and let these veterans know that we have their six and the House of Representatives stands with them on their path to healing.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time, as I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this needed legislation and I associate my remarks with what Mr. WALTZ just stated.

Anyone who has ever had the joy—as I have through my entire life—to have those animals associated with you knows how uplifting and helpful it can be to these people. As has been mentioned many times, we have not been making a dent in our suicide rate, and it is time to start thinking out of the box.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers.

I ask my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 4305, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARCIA of Illinois). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4305, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROTECT AND RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES ACT

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4044) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the National Estuary Program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4044

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act".

SEC. 2. MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE.

Section 320(a)(2)(B) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(a)(2)(B)) is amended by striking "and Peconic Bay, New York" and inserting "Peconic Bay, New York; Casco Bay, Maine; Tampa Bay, Florida; Coastal Bend, Texas; San Juan Bay,

Puerto Rico; Tillamook Bay, Oregon; Piscataqua Region, New Hampshire; Barnegat Bay, New Jersey; Maryland Coastal Bays, Maryland; Charlotte Harbor, Florida; Mobile Bay, Alabama; Morro Bay, California; and Lower Columbia River, Oregon and Washington".

SEC. 3. PURPOSES OF CONFERENCE.

Section 320(b)(4) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(b)(4)) is amended—

(1) by striking "management plan that recommends" and inserting "management plan that—

"(A) recommends"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(B) addresses the effects of recurring extreme weather events on the estuary, including the identification and assessment of vulnerabilities in the estuary and the development and implementation of adaptation strategies; and

"(C) increases public education and awareness of the ecological health and water quality conditions of the estuary;"

SEC. 4. MEMBERS OF CONFERENCE.

Section 320(c)(5) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(c)(5)) is amended by inserting "nonprofit organizations," after "educational institutions,".

SEC. 5. GRANTS.

Section 320(g)(4)(C) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(g)(4)(C)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding clause (i)—

(A) by inserting "emerging," after "urgent"; and

(B) by striking "coastal areas" and inserting "the estuaries selected by the Administrator under subsection (a)(2), or that relate to the coastal resiliency of such estuaries";

(2) by redesignating clauses (vi) and (vii) as clauses (viii) and (ix), respectively, and inserting after clause (v) the following:

"(vi) stormwater runoff;

"(vii) accelerated land loss;" and

(3) in clause (viii), as so redesignated, by inserting "extreme weather," after "sea level rise".

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 320(i)(1) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(i)(1)) is amended by inserting "and \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026," after "2021".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MALINOWSKI) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 4044, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to lead this bipartisan reauthorization of the National Estuary Program, a successful nonregulatory program to improve the water quality and ecological integrity of our Nation's estuaries, a program with a long history of support on both sides of the aisle.

Estuaries are extraordinarily productive ecosystems where fresh water from rivers and streams mixes with salt water from the ocean.

In my district in my home State of New Jersey, the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program encompasses some 250 square miles of open water, including parts of the Raritan, Rahway, Elizabeth, and Hackensack Rivers.

My bill, the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act, makes several important improvements to this program. First, it nearly doubles funding for the program's 28 estuaries of national significance, including the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program.

It ensures that management plans governing nationally significant estuaries consider the effects of recurring extreme weather events and that they develop and implement appropriate adaptation strategies. It expands eligibility for grants under the program to organizations working to address stormwater runoff, coastal resiliency, and accelerated land loss issues.

It requires the NEP management, the regional conferences that are part of the NEP, to develop and implement strategies to increase local awareness about the ecological health and water quality of estuaries.

It is hard to overstate just how important estuaries are to the broader marine ecology. They are sometimes referred to as the nurseries of the sea because of the vast and diverse array of marine animals that spend the early parts of their lives in them, with their calm waters providing a safe habitat for smaller birds and other animals, as well as for spawning and nesting.

Further, estuaries act as stopover sites for migratory animals including ducks, geese, and salmon. They filter out pollutants from rivers and streams before they flow into the ocean, and they protect inland areas from flooding, with their broad and shallow waters able to absorb sudden storm surges.

They are the natural infrastructure that protects human communities from flooding. And of course, they also help the economies of every community that relies on fishing and tourism and recreation.

So it is my privilege to play a role in protecting and strengthening these critical ecosystems and in preserving the natural beauty of my State of New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Congressman GRAVES for teaming up with me on this bill. Congressman GRAVES is a longtime champion for the estuarine system in his district, and I am glad to partner with him.

I want to thank Congresswoman NAPOLITANO for her leadership of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee. I want to thank Congresswoman FLETCHER for her support

as an original cosponsor, and Congressman LARSEN for making the bill even stronger, as well as more than two dozen of my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans alike, who have cosponsored this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support as well of H.R. 4044, the Protect and Restore American's Estuary Act.

I also want to thank my colleague from New Jersey (Mr. MALINOWSKI) for introducing this legislation; our chairwoman, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. GRAVES, and everybody who has worked on this outstanding bill that we want to see move forward here that has moved forward so many other times.

H.R. 4044, reauthorizes the National Estuary Program which focuses on estuaries of national significance across the Nation, including one in my own backyard, very literally, the Indian River Lagoon, the heart and soul of my district.

Estuaries are not just critical natural habitats that provide enormous economic benefits, but they are a part of our way of life for those of us who live anywhere near them or around them. They are where we go fishing, where we see our children recreate and wade in the waters. It is where we see dolphin and manatee. That is where we see people spend their summers, travel to come see the blue waters and the fish and everything else that thrives in those ecosystems.

The National Estuary Program is pivotal to the preservation of these very unique ecosystems, and it provides an enormous return on the taxpayer's investment. On average, the estuary program raises \$19 for every \$1 provided by the Environmental Protection Agency.

It is because of this and many other reasons that I see on a day-to-day basis with the estuaries in my backyard that I want to urge support of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1300

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN).

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4044, the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act, a bipartisan piece of legislation to reauthorize and improve the National Estuary Program, the NEP. I thank Representative MALINOWSKI for his leadership on preserving our Nation's estuaries as well.

Puget Sound, where I am from, is the largest estuary by water volume in the contiguous United States, and the waters and wildlife that call it home are one of the cornerstones of north-west Washington's environment, culture, and maritime economy.

As co-chair of the Congressional Estuary Caucus, I strongly support ef-

forts to ensure robust Federal investment in the National Estuary Program and its vital projects, which is why I am proud and very pleased to support the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act. This critical legislation reauthorizes the National Estuary Program through fiscal year 2026 and increases funding for this critical program to \$50 million annually.

H.R. 4044 also includes language I authored making clear that NEP competitive funds must be allocated for NEP-listed estuaries or projects that relate to these estuaries' coastal resiliency. This will help ensure that the Environmental Protection Agency follows congressional intent for NEP dollars to support local estuary restoration projects.

I look forward to voting for H.R. 4044 to ensure local communities across the country can continue their work to protect and restore estuaries.

On a related note, I also want to rise in support of the PUGET SOS Act, which will be considered later today. Introduced by my colleagues in the Washington delegation, Representatives HECK and KILMER, this bill will improve and expand Federal engagement in Puget Sound recovery efforts.

At a time when the impacts of climate change threaten coastal communities throughout the Pacific Northwest and the U.S., endanger iconic species such as the southern resident killer whale, and decimate critical habitats, federal engagement and investment in estuary restoration must be a priority.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN).

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman MAST for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4044, the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act, of which I am a proud cosponsor.

The National Estuary Program is an initiative committed to protecting and restoring the water quality and ecological integrity of 28 estuaries across the country, including the San Juan Bay Estuary Program in my congressional district.

This estuary is the only tropical estuary in the program and the only one outside the continental U.S. It also provides habitat to 160 species of birds, 200 species of wetland plants, 124 species of fish, and 20 species of amphibians and reptiles, including endangered animals such as the Antillean manatee and the hawksbill and leatherback turtles.

The San Juan Bay annually receives 80 percent of imports for Puerto Rico through docks and ports throughout the system, playing a crucial role for the island's economy. Last year alone, the estuary received 9.5 million visitors, numbers only expected to increase as the island recovers from past hurricanes. The estuary aids in flood

prevention for the island's metropolitan area, which is located within the boundaries of the estuary.

I thank the chairman and the ranking member for bringing this bill forward. Of course, I am going to be for it, and I think it is a great initiative not just to protect but also care for all our wetlands in the Nation.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO.)

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MALINOWSKI) for H.R. 4044, the reauthorization of the very popular National Estuary Program, or NEP. It allows more proactive measures to be eligible under the program.

The strong bipartisan support this bill has received is evidence of its widespread popularity and success. I am very pleased that several members of this committee have all cosponsored the bill. The bill represents the commitment to our coastal areas and the vital role they play in economic drivers, natural water filters, and protection from flooding events.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge the EPA and States to work together to designate more national estuaries that can be eligible for this program, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill, H.R. 4044.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4044 will have a profound impact on districts across America. That is a fact. It is why I am here to support it today. It includes my own district, by increasing public education and awareness around the health conditions of estuaries.

The Indian River Lagoon I spoke about is one of the most biologically diverse estuaries in all of North America and a major economic driver for the five counties that it borders. The lagoon faces enormous challenges year after year and summer after summer, but through the National Estuary Program, there has been a pilot-scale demonstration of seagrass restoration, which is one of the biggest challenges that we face. The destruction of our seagrass each year is like a forest fire underneath the waters of our estuary.

Storm water quality improvement projects, septic-to-sewer projects, and many other projects and initiatives that are vital to our estuary are all implemented here.

With the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act, we will build on the enormous success of the National Estuary Program. It is why I couldn't be more proud to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support and adoption of this bipartisan piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD letters of support for H.R. 4044 from the New York-New Jersey Harbor and Estuary Program, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estu-

ary Program, San Francisco Estuary Partnership, Puget Sound Partnership, Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program, and Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership.

NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY
HARBOR & ESTUARY PROGRAM,
New York, NY, February 4, 2020.

Hon. PETER A. DEFazio,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO,
Chairman, Water Resources and Environment
Subcommittee, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Ranking Member, Water Resources and Environment
Subcommittee, Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure, House
of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN DEFazio AND NAPOLITANO,
RANKING MEMBERS YOUNG AND WESTERMAN:
Thank you for your leadership in support of
the cooperative conservation and manage-
ment of our nation's vital estuaries, and in
particular for the unanimous approval in
your committee for HR 4044, a bill to reau-
thorize the National Estuary Program.

This legislation invests directly in the
stewardship of our nation's coasts. It empow-
ers local communities in a non-regulatory,
collaborative and science based strategy to
safeguard the places where we live, work and
recreate. The 28 National Estuary Programs
(NEP) located around the nation's coastline
engage industries, businesses, and other
community members to develop solutions for
tough problems. The NEP's public-private
partnerships stretch federal dollars to pro-
vide successful on-the-ground results driven
by diverse stakeholders. NEP partners in-
clude wastewater utilities; port authorities,
shippers, and related maritime industry;
local restaurants & tourist businesses; de-
sign, engineering and construction profes-
sionals; state and local governments; col-
leges and universities, and community and
environmental organizations.

NEPs around the country are extremely ef-
ficient at leveraging funds to increase their
ability to restore and protect their coastal
ecosystems. The NEPs have obtained over
\$19 for every \$1 provided, generating over \$4
billion for on-the-ground efforts since 2003.
HR 4044 would amplify and improve on the
reforms signed into law in the 114th Congress
that created a competitive program to ad-
dress urgent challenges while streamlining
the administrative costs of the program.

PROGRESS ON THE GROUND

NEPs have collectively restored and pro-
tected more than 2,000,000 acres of vital habi-
tats since 2000 alone. Consistent Congres-
sional funding of the National Estuary Pro-
grams is essential—resulting in clean water,
healthy estuaries, and strong coastal com-
munities. This investment in our national
estuaries will help strengthen America's
economy and support thousands of jobs, and
will secure the future of our coastal com-
munities.

Here in New York and New Jersey, we can
report on how funds already invested in this
program are being put to extremely good
purpose in protecting and restoring estuaries
and coastal communities:

Working with communities in the Bronx,
Harlem, Passaic, and Hackensack River wa-
tersheds to track down sources of floatable
trash before they enter the water;

Helping local governments in New Jersey
and New York identify and right-size cul-
verts and bridges to improve habitat and re-
duce street flooding;

Working with wastewater utilities in Eliz-
abeth and Ridgefield Park to prioritize and
make critical investments in outfalls needed
to address rising sea levels;

Restoring shoreline ecology and improving
fisheries in the Hudson and East River by
creating oyster reefs and other restoration
efforts

The value of our oceans, estuaries and
coasts to our nation is immense, and has
never been more important. Over half the US
population lives in coastal watershed coun-
ties, many of these in estuaries of national
significance. Roughly half the nation's gross
domestic product is generated in those coun-
ties and adjacent ocean waters. According to
NOAA's 2019 report on the ocean economy,
ocean industries contributed \$320 billion to
U.S. economy, while employment in the
ocean economy increased by 14.5 percent by
2016, compared to 4.8 percent in the U.S.
economy as a whole.

Thank you again for your efforts to ad-
vance this visionary legislation and look for-
ward to working with you to reauthorize this
successful program.

Sincerely,

ROBERT PIRANI,
Director, NYNJHEP.

BARATARIA-TERREBONNE,
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM,
Thibodaux, LA, February 4, 2020.

Hon. PETER A. DEFazio,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representa-
tives, Washington, DC.

Hon. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO,
Chairman, Water Resources and Environment
Subcommittee, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representa-
tives, Washington, DC.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Ranking Member, Water Resources and Envi-
ronment Subcommittee, Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure, House
of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN DEFazio AND NAPOLITANO,
RANKING MEMBERS YOUNG AND WESTERMAN:
Thank you for your leadership in support of
the National Estuary Program, and in par-
ticular for your unanimous approval in your
committee for HR 4044, a bill to reauthorize
this highly successful program. I understand
this bill may be considered by the full House
of Representatives, and applaud your efforts
to advance this legislation. We at the
Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Pro-
gram strongly applaud the leadership of Rep-
resentative Graves to advance this legisla-
tion to address Louisiana's land loss crisis.
Funding from this program empowers local
people and their ongoing love of the land,
water, culture, and each other to use the
best science available to address the
estuary's perils.

This legislation invests directly in the
stewardship of our nation's coasts. It empow-
ers local communities in a non-regulatory,
collaborative and science-based strategy to
safeguard the places where we live, work,
and recreate. Of all federally funded coastal
programs, only NEPs organize local stake-
holders as partners in a unique decision-
making framework to address local pri-
orities. NEPs provide technical, management,
and communication assistance to develop
priorities and implement comprehensive ac-
tions: storm water and infrastructure
projects, seagrass and shellfish restoration

which support fishing and tourist industries, science and monitoring to guide decision-making, and innovative education programs designed for the next generation of Americans.

NEPS: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERS

The NEP consists of 28 unique, voluntary programs established by the Clean Water Act to protect and improve estuaries of national significance. Each NEP engages its local community in a non-regulatory, consensus-driven, and science-based process. For every federal dollar, NEPs collectively leverage \$19 in local funds to protect and improve coastal environments, communities, and economies. This investment in our national estuaries strengthens America's economy and supports thousands of jobs, and will secure the future of our coastal communities.

NEPs engage industries, businesses, and other community members to develop solutions for tough problems. NEP's public-private partnerships stretch federal dollars to provide on-the-ground results driven by diverse stakeholders. NEP partners include commercial agriculture and fisheries, energy and water utilities, local businesses, construction and landscaping professionals, state and local governments, academic institutions, and community groups.

The value of our oceans, estuaries and coasts to our nation is immense. Over half the U.S. population lives in coastal watershed counties. Roughly half the nation's gross domestic product is generated in those counties and adjacent ocean waters. In 2019 alone, ocean industries contributed \$320 billion to U.S. economy.

RESULTS ON THE GROUND

NEPs have had great success in protecting and restoring estuaries and coastal communities:

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) is restoring maritime forest ridges along coastal Louisiana with public and private partnerships. These ridges are vital habitat for wildlife and provide storm surge protection for business, industry, and homeowners.

Morro Bay National Estuary Program is restoring underwater eelgrass meadows after precipitous decline in the last decade. Promising restoration results show that collaborative research, community outreach, and adaptive management make a difference for healthy estuary habitats on the California's Central Coast.

All three California National Estuary Programs are partnering to improve the status and use of resources for boaters to pump out waste from their boats. These stations are critical to keeping bacteria and other pollution from entering sensitive coastal waters.

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program is working with the Bronx River Alliance and other community groups to track down sources of floatable trash in the River.

The Center of the Inland Bays in Delaware is bringing the oyster back, using living shorelines to stop erosion, protect property and restore habitat.

NEPs have collectively restored and protected more than 2,000,000 acres of vital habitats since 2000 alone.

Important reforms were made to the National Estuary Program in the reauthorization during the 114th Congress, including the creation of a competitive program to address urgent challenges and the streamlining of administrative costs. HR 4044 amplifies and improves on these reforms. We thank you again for your efforts to advance this visionary legislation and look forward to working with you to reauthorize this successful program.

Sincerely,

DEAN BLANCHARD,
BTNEP Acting Director.

SAN FRANCISCO ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP,
San Francisco, CA, February 4, 2020.

Hon. PETER A. DEFazio,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Washington, DC.

Hon. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO,
Chairman, Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Washington, DC.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Ranking Member, Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN DEFazio AND NAPOLITANO, RANKING MEMBERS YOUNG AND WESTERMAN: I am writing to thank you for your leadership in support of the National Estuary Program (NEP). For over 30 years, NEPs have advanced national priorities through a place-based, non-regulatory, collaborative approach. NEP's promote efficient partnerships to achieve on-the-ground success, engaging industries, businesses, local communities, scientists, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders.

Communities and businesses depend on our nation's estuaries. Loss of coastal habitats, pollutants entering our waters, and increased coastal flooding are challenging our coasts and affecting the critical economies we rely on. Over 82% of the nation's population live in the coastal areas that NEPs directly support. The 28 NEPs are leading the way in using a non-regulatory approach to working with industry and communities on innovations to protect life, business, and property from loss, damage, flooding, and drought.

NEPs leverage federal funds to build the capacity of local partners to implement innovative and beneficial projects. For every dollar EPA provides, NEPs leverage \$19 in local funds to protect and improve coastal environments, communities and economies. Recent examples of NEP successes include:

The San Francisco Estuary Partnership is collaborating with wastewater treatment facilities to advance innovative nature-based solutions along the shoreline to remove contaminants, secure potable water resources, increase flood protection, and restore habitat

All three California National Estuary Programs are partnering to reduce raw sewage disposal into the water from recreational boats, keeping bacteria and other pollution from entering coastal waters and threatening public health

The Center of the Inland Bays in Delaware is bringing the oyster back, with all its ecological and economic benefits, after it nearly disappeared in the last century. The Center is using living shorelines to stop erosion, protect property and restore habitat

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program is working with the Bronx River Alliance and other community groups to track down sources of floatable trash in the River, including locations in upstream Westchester County

NEPs have collectively restored and protected more than 2,000,000 acres of vital habitats since 2000 alone

Thank you again for your strong support of this program over the years.

Sincerely,

CAITLIN SWEENEY,
Director.

PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP,
Tacoma, WA, February 4, 2020.

Hon. PETER A. DEFazio,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO,
Chairman, Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Ranking Member, Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN DEFazio AND NAPOLITANO, RANKING MEMBERS YOUNG AND WESTERMAN: Thank you for your leadership in support of the National Estuary Program, and in particular for your unanimous approval in your committee for HR 4044, a bill to reauthorize this highly successful program. I understand this bill may be considered by the full House of Representatives, and applaud your efforts to advance this legislation.

In particular I would like to recognize and applaud the leadership of Representative Larson on this issue. He has been a stalwart supporter of this program nationally, and in particular a champion of Puget Sound. I appreciate his efforts as a senior member of your committee to advance this legislation that is so important to Washington.

Puget Sound is a complex ecosystem encompassing mountains, farmlands, cities, rivers, forests, and wetlands. Sixteen major rivers flow to Puget Sound and 20 treaty tribes call the region home. Currently, 4.5 million people live in the Puget Sound area, with another 1.3 million expected to live here by 2040. Seattle was the second fastest growing city in the nation in 2018, and the fastest in 2017. We are a region of innovators and entrepreneurs: 11 Fortune 500 companies are headquartered in the Puget Sound area, many of which have shaped 21st century life. Our economy is roaring, and the region's natural beauty and recreational opportunities help businesses and companies attract top talent.

On the surface, Puget Sound looks healthy and inviting, but, in fact, Puget Sound is in grave trouble. Southern Resident orcas, Chinook salmon, and steelhead are all listed under the Endangered Species Act. Toxic chemicals and pharmaceuticals continue to pollute our waterways, and shellfish beds are routinely closed to commercial and recreational harvest due to fecal contamination. Habitat degradation continues to outpace restoration. While this situation at times seems impossibly gloomy, the hundreds of passionate people who are devoted to seeing the return of a healthy and resilient Puget Sound give us hope.

Scientists say that we can still recover Puget Sound, but only if we act boldly now. We know what we need to do. The primary barriers between us and more food for orcas, clean and sufficient water for people and fish, sustainable working lands, and harvestable shellfish are funding and political fortitude.

The single greatest step we could take to ensure a durable, systematic, and science-based effort for Puget Sound recovery is to fully fund the implementation of habitat protection and restoration, water quality protection, and salmon recovery programs. The National Estuary Program (NEP) is a vital piece of this funding puzzle.

Of all federally funded coastal programs, only NEPs organize local stakeholders as

partners in a unique decision-making framework to address local priorities. NEPs provide technical, management, and communication assistance to develop priorities and implement comprehensive actions: stormwater and infrastructure projects, seagrass and shellfish restoration which support fishing and tourist industries, science and monitoring to guide decision-making, and innovative education programs designed for the next generation of Americans.

The NEP consists of 28 unique, voluntary programs established by the Clean Water Act to protect and improve estuaries of national significance. Each NEP engages its local community in a non-regulatory, consensus-driven, and science-based process. For every dollar EPA provides, NEPs leverage \$19 in local funds to protect and improve coastal environments, communities and economies.

NEPs have collectively restored and protected more than 2,000,000 acres of vital habitats since 2000 alone. Consistent Congressional funding of the National Estuary Programs is essential resulting in clean water, healthy estuaries, and strong coastal communities. This investment in our national estuaries will help strengthen America's economy and support thousands of jobs, and will secure the future of our coastal communities.

Thank you for your strong support of this program over the years. Funds already invested in this program are being put to extremely good purpose in protecting and restoring estuaries and coastal communities.

Recent examples include the following:

Our partners are restoring forage fish spawning, which is critically important in the Puget Sound food web—back to large areas of shoreline, and reducing the flow of stormwater containing toxic pollutants into Puget Sound.

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program is working with the Bronx River Alliance and other community groups to track down sources of floatable trash in the River, including locations in upstream Westchester County.

The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership in Maine, along with partners, is monitoring nutrients around Casco Bay to provide real-time data on nutrient processes. CBEP's nutrient analyzer has been automatically collecting nitrate, nitrite and ammonium samples and working collaboratively to assure safe levels in the bay.

The Center of the Inland Bays in Delaware is bringing the oyster back, with all its ecological and economic benefits, after it nearly disappeared in the last century. The Center is using living shorelines to stop erosion, protect property and restore habitat.

As you know, important reforms were made to the National Estuary Program (NEP) in the reauthorization that was signed into law in the 114th Congress. These reforms created a competitive program to address urgent challenges and maximize funds received by our national estuaries, while streamlining the administrative costs of the program.

HR 4044 would amplify and improve on these reforms, and continue the cost-effective streamlining begun in the 114th Congress.

We are running out of time: the Center for Whale Research reported this weekend that another Southern Resident orca, L41, has gone missing. With its loss, the population will drop to 72 animals, the lowest in 40 years. Your action now to pass HR 4044 can help.

Sincerely,

LAURA L. BLACKMORE,
Executive Director.

SANTA MONICA BAY
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM,
February 3, 2020.

Hon. PETER A. DEFAZIO,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO,
Chairman, Water Resources and Environment
Subcommittee, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representa-
tives, Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representa-
tives, Washington, DC.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Ranking Member, Water Resources and Envi-
ronment Subcommittee, Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure, House
of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMEN DEFAZIO AND NAPOLITANO,
RANKING MEMBERS YOUNG AND WESTERMAN: I
am writing to thank you for your leadership
in support of the National Estuary Program,
and in particular for your unanimous ap-
proval in your committee for HR 4044, a bill
to reauthorize this highly successful pro-
gram. I also like to recognize the efforts of
California Representatives Salud Carbajal,
Harley Rouda, and Eric Swalwell for their
co-sponsorship of this bill. We understand
this bill may be considered by the full House
of Representatives and applaud your efforts
to advance this legislation.

The National Estuary Program consists of
28, voluntary and geographically specific
partnerships to promote the vitality of the
United States Estuaries of National Signifi-
cance. Each NEP engages its local com-
munity in a non-regulatory, consensus-driven,
and science-based process. For every dollar
EPA provides, NEPs leverage \$19 in local
funds to protect and improve coastal en-
vironments, communities, and economies.

NEPs provide a suite of skills to advance
the technical, management, and communi-
cation needs of their consensus driven Com-
prehensive Conservation and Management
Plans. These plans seek to implement co-
ordinated actions such as: storm water and
infrastructure projects, seagrass, dune, wet-
land, and shellfish restoration, and the con-
servation of open spaces. NEPs also support
and conduct scientific monitoring to identify
and address sources of environmental harm
that are detrimental to public health and
coastal economies.

NEPs engage industries, businesses, and
other community members to develop solu-
tions for tough problems. The NEPs' pub-
lic-private partnerships stretch federal dollars
to provide successful on-the-ground results
driven by diverse stakeholders. NEP partners
include commercial agriculture and fish-
eries, energy and water utilities, local res-
taurants & tourist businesses, construction
and landscaping professionals, engineering
and mining companies, state and local gov-
ernments, colleges and universities, and
other community organizations.

The value of our oceans, estuaries and
coasts to our nation is immense. According
to NOAA's 2019 report on the ocean economy,
ocean industries contributed \$320 billion to
U.S. economy, while employment in the
ocean economy increased by 14.5 percent by
2016, compared to 4.8 percent in the U.S.
economy as a whole. NEPs work to protect
and enhance these nationally significant
economic engines.

Thank you for your strong support of this
program over the years. Funds already in-
vested in this program are being put to ex-
tremely good purpose in protecting and re-
storing estuaries and coastal communities.

Recent examples include:

The Santa Monica Bay National Estuary
Program has restored 51.9 acres of kelp for-

est, off the Palos Verdes Peninsula in the
past six years. This restoration effort has
helped reverse an 80% decline in this vital
ecosystem which supports several of Califor-
nia's most lucrative fisheries and allows for
the recovery of endangered abalone.

The Puget Sound Partnership is restoring
forage fish spawning—which are critically
important in the Puget Sound foodweb—
back to large areas of shoreline and reducing
the flow of stormwater containing toxic pol-
lutants into Puget Sound.

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program is
working with the Bronx River Alliance and
other community groups to track down
sources of floatable trash in the River, in-
cluding locations in upstream Westchester
County.

The Casco Bay Estuary Partnership in
Maine, along with partners, is monitoring
nutrients around Casco Bay to provide real-
time data on nutrient processes. CBEP's nu-
trient analyzer has been automatically col-
lecting nitrate, nitrite and ammonium sam-
ples and working collaboratively to assure
safe levels in the bay.

As you know important reforms were made
to the National Estuary Program in the re-
authorization that was signed into law in the
114th Congress. These reforms created a com-
petitive program to address urgent chal-
lenges and maximize funds received by our
national estuaries, while streamlining the
administrative costs of the program. HR 4044
would amplify and improve on these reforms,
and continue the cost-effective streamlining
begun in the 114th Congress.

Thank you again for your visionary leader-
ship, and that of the three California Rep-
resentatives Salud Carbajal, Harley Rouda,
and Eric Swalwell who have cosponsored this
bill to reauthorize this successful program.

Sincerely,

TOM FORD,
Director, Santa Monica Bay
National Estuary Program.

LOWER COLUMBIA
ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP,
Portland, OR, February 5, 2020.

Hon. PETER A. DEFAZIO,
Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infra-
structure, House of Representatives, Wash-
ington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representa-
tives, Washington, DC.

Hon. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO,
Chair, Water Resources and Environment Sub-
committee, Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure, House of Representa-
tives, Washington, DC.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Ranking Member, Water Resources and Envi-
ronment Subcommittee, Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure, House
of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRS DEFAZIO AND NAPOLITANO,
RANKING MEMBERS YOUNG AND WESTERMAN:
Thank you for your leadership and strong
support of the National Estuary Program
(NEP), and for your unanimous approval in
your committee for HR 4044, a bill to reau-
thorize this highly successful program. I un-
derstand this bill may be considered by the
full House of Representatives and appreciate
your efforts to support this legislation.

The NEP stands out as one of the most ef-
fective federal programs. The National Pro-
gram creates a framework—and account-
ability—for local partners, representing di-
verse interests to address the physical,
chemical, social, biological, economic and
cultural challenges that threaten our na-
tion's estuaries. It is this collaborative
framework that allows NEPs to tackle issues
that no agency or state can tackle alone.

Of all federally funded coastal programs, only NEPs implement a community-based decision framework to address local and national priorities. NEPs and their partners address:

- Stormwater and infrastructure projects;
- Eelgrass and shellfish restoration, supporting aquaculture, fishing, and tourist industries;

- Land and wildlife conservation;
- Science and monitoring to guide decision-making; and

- Innovative education programs designed for the next generation of Americans.

The NEP consists of 28 unique, voluntary programs established by the Clean Water Act to protect and improve estuaries of national significance. Each NEP engages its local community in a non-regulatory, consensus-driven, and science-based process. For every federal dollar, NEPs collectively leverage \$19 in local funds to protect and improve coastal environments, communities, and economies. This investment in our national estuaries strengthens America's economy and supports thousands of jobs and secures the future of our coastal communities.

NEPs engage local industries, businesses, and other community members to develop—and implement—solutions for tough problems. NEP's public-private partnerships stretch federal dollars to provide on-the-ground results driven by diverse stakeholders. NEP partners include commercial agriculture and fisheries, energy and water utilities, local businesses, construction and landscaping professionals, state and local governments, academic institutions, teachers, students, and community groups.

The value of our oceans, estuaries and coasts to our nation is immense. Over half the U.S. population lives in coastal watershed counties. Roughly half the nation's gross domestic product is generated in those counties and adjacent ocean waters. In 2019 alone, ocean industries contributed \$320 billion to U.S. economy.

RESULTS ON THE GROUND

NEPs are focused on results on the ground and have had great success in protecting and restoring estuaries and coastal communities:

- In the lower Columbia River since 2000, we have:

- Restored 28,387 acres of habitat with 100 partners to help recover threatened and endangered fish.

- Provided 81,485 students with over 407,704 hours of outdoor science learning, helping teachers meet benchmarks, and fill in gaps in science education.

- Planted 144,721 native trees along riparian corridors with students and volunteers of all ages.

- Raised more than \$76 million—100% of those funds stay in Oregon and Washington addressing local priorities. These are monies local entities cannot access on their own and we can't raise without the NEP funds.

- Leverage \$11.5 million in federal NEP funds to bring a total of \$76 million to our region, 100% spent in Oregon and Washington.

- Generated 1,524 family wage jobs, mostly in construction, restoring habitat, that cannot be exported.

These results are repeated around the nation in each of the 28 national estuary programs:

- Morro Bay National Estuary Program is restoring underwater eelgrass meadows after a precipitous decline in the last decade. Promising restoration results show that collaborative research, community outreach, and adaptive management make a difference for healthy estuary habitats on the California's Central Coast.

All three California National Estuary Programs are partnering to improve the status

and use of resources for boaters to pump out waste from their boats. These stations are critical to keeping bacteria and other pollution from entering sensitive coastal waters.

The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program is working with the Bronx River Alliance and other community groups to track down sources of floatable trash in the River.

The Center of the Inland Bays in Delaware is bringing the oyster back, using living shorelines to stop erosion, protect property and restore habitat.

NEPs have collectively restored and protected more than 2,000,000 acres of vital habitats since 2000 alone.

Important reforms were made to the National Estuary Program in the reauthorization during the 114th Congress, including the creation of a competitive program to address urgent challenges and the streamlining of administrative costs. HR 4044 amplifies and improves on these reforms.

Despite these great outcomes, threats to our waters and our communities remain. Toxics from stormwater contaminate clean water and habitat and cause cancer and neurological damage to humans and river species. Changes in precipitation, temperature, and storminess increase sea levels, increase erosion, and intensify flood events, leaving many of our rural communities and much of our local infrastructure vulnerable to these variabilities. Micro plastics are pervasive in our rivers and streams; they are filling the bellies of ocean species and impair human immune systems, disrupt hormones, and cause cancer. Disparities in education and lack of opportunities for hands-on outdoor learning exist for too many in our communities.

We thank you again for your efforts to advance this legislation and look forward to working with you to reauthorize this successful program.

Sincerely yours,

DEBRAH MARRIOTT,
Executive Director.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.R. 4044. I want to thank Mr. MALINOWSKI and Chairwoman NAPOLITANO for their leadership in crafting this legislation and bringing it to the floor today for consideration by the full House of Representatives. It is vital that we, as a nation, focus on preserving and restoring our estuaries.

I am especially pleased that the bill almost doubles the amount of funding available to support national estuaries. This should finally allow the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to move forward with adding more of these critical ecosystems to the National Estuary Program.

As one of only five or six hypersaline lagoons in the world and the only one in the nation, the Laguna Madre has unique conservation requirements. Adjacent to the longest barrier island in the world, Padre Island, the Laguna Madre is home to five species of endangered sea turtle and a critical migratory bird habitat for dozens of endangered or threatened bird species. The EPA previously designated the Upper Laguna Madre as a national estuary, and with this additional funding, we can now move forward with adding the Lower Laguna Madre to the existing designation.

Having grown up in Brownsville, Texas, Chairwoman Napolitano knows the beauty and importance of this national treasure. On behalf of my constituents, I want to express the grati-

tude of South Texas for the hard work and dedication of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Members and staff to conserving the Lower Laguna Madre for future generations.

I look forward to working with our Senators to help pass this legislation, and with our local officials, especially Cameron County Commissioner David Garza, and our governor, so we can finally secure a National Estuary Program designation for the Lower Laguna Madre. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4044.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4044, the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act. As Co-Chair of the Congressional Estuary Caucus, I am pleased to support this bill to reauthorize the National Estuary Program through Fiscal Year 2026. The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, in my home state of Oregon, is one of the twenty-eight National Estuary Programs across the country. The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership is leading outstanding resiliency efforts in the Pacific Northwest to restore and protect habitat, improve water quality, restore flood plains, and address marine debris. This bill will help the National Estuary Programs consider the effects of extreme weather events that are increasingly common in the climate crisis, and implement appropriate adaptation strategies in their management plans. Additionally, this bill takes important steps to allow the NEPs to better address storm water runoff, coastal resiliency, and accelerate land loss mitigation efforts. This past weekend, we celebrated World Wetlands Day. Our coastal wetlands and estuaries are often overlooked and undervalued, but they are on the frontlines of the climate crisis. We can help support and safeguard our National Estuary Programs by passing the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MALINOWSKI) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4044, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY RESTORATION ACT

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1132) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to establish a grant program to support the restoration of San Francisco Bay, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1132

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "San Francisco Bay Restoration Act".