of discretionary funds made available to the EPA.

Finally, the bill allocates a portion of eligible program funds for competitive awards to Federal, State, and local stakeholders to address certain high priority estuary needs, including algae blooms, hypoxia, flooding, and invasive species. This is identical to a bill that passed the House by voice vote in the last Congress.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 944, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 944.

I am pleased the House is considering H.R. 944, a bill that I introduced along with Congressman LOBIONDO and Congressman MURPHY to reauthorize the National Estuary Program through 2020.

I want to thank my colleagues for their hard work in pulling this legislation together.

Estuaries are critically important to the health of our Nation's environment and our economy. Their waters are a unique mixture of freshwater, drainage from the land, and salty seawater. Estuaries provide vital nesting and feeding areas for many aquatic plants and animals. They also help maintain healthy ocean environments by filtering out sediment and pollutants from rivers and streams before they flow into the ocean.

In addition to improving habitat for critical wildlife like salmon, restoring estuaries can have important carbon sequestration effects.

For example, a report last year on the Snohomish Estuary in my district found that currently planned and in-progress restoration projects will result in at least 2.55 million tons of $CO_2$ sequestered from the atmosphere over the next 100 years. That is the equivalent of a year's worth of emissions from a half a million automobiles.

Over half of the U.S. population lives in coastal areas, including along the shores of estuaries. These areas provided 69 million jobs and contributed $7.9 trillion to the economy recently. These gains come from commercial and recreational fishing, as well as tourism and other forms of regulation recreation. By one estimate, restoring our estuary areas could create more than 30 jobs for every $1 million invested.

In the Pacific Northwest and across the country, healthy estuaries like the Puget Sound support fish, birds, and other wildlife, and sustain important economic and recreational activities like trade, fishing, tourism, and many other forms of outdoor recreation.

Estuaries in the Pacific Northwest also serve as habitat and spawning areas for salmon, another critical driver for our regional economy.

Unfortunately, human activities have led to a decline in the health of estuaries, threatening them in many coastal parts of the country. Population growth in areas abutting estuaries have led to an increase in storm water runoff and sewage discharges, ultimately polluting the waters with toxins.

Fortunately, the National Estuary Program, which would be authorized by H.R. 944, is an important part of remedying these problems facing our Nation's estuaries. Since 1987, the program has operated successfully at the EPA in partnership with other State and local entities and has fostered innovative solutions to local water quality programs.

Funding from the program helps create solutions to nurture estuaries back to health, like the comprehensive plan we have for the Puget Sound recovery.

This bipartisan legislation that we have today will ensure that local organizations across the country, in partnership with the EPA, can protect and restore estuaries for the benefit of future generations.

I support this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it as well.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. LOBIONDO).

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank Chairman GIBBS and Chairman SHUSTER and Ranking Members DeFazio and Napolitano for helping bring H.R. 944, the National Estuary Program Reauthorization, to the floor.

I would also like to thank my colleagues Mr. POSEY and Mr. MURPHY of Florida, and especially Mr. LARSEN, who has been great to work with on a number of issues.

This version of the National Estuary Program Reauthorization is fiscally responsible by reducing the authorization levels by $8 million while ultimately increasing the amount of money each estuary program will receive. It is a very commonsense approach that helps get the job done.

This reauthorization will detail just how the EPA is to spend the authorized and appropriated money.

Unlike many of the programs under the Clean Water Act, the National Estuary Program is a nonregulatory program. That was mentioned before, but I think it bears repeating: it is a nonregulatory program.

Instead, it is designed to support collaborative, voluntary efforts of Federal, State, and local stakeholders to restore degraded estuaries. I think this is exactly the approach that will get results, and an approach that will encourage people to be working together for something that really can actually see a very positive result with our estuaries.

Unfortunately, the National Estuary Program has been losing money due to EPA administrative costs. By setting limits of 5 percent for administrative costs for the EPA, we can guarantee 80 percent of the funding goes to the end user, the NEP, and not bureaucratic salaries and red tape.

□ 1800

In this year's reauthorization, we have set aside 15 percent of the funding for a competitive award program. This program will seek applications meant to deal with urgent and challenging issues that threaten the ecological and economic well-being of coastal areas.

By structuring how the money is spent and lowering authorization levels, this legislation strikes the right balance of fiscal and environmental responsibility.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 944.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, we have no further speakers, so I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 944.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, I urge support for H.R. 944, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. GIBBS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 944.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

## RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 6 o'clock and 1 minute p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

## AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MILLER of Florida) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

## STRENGTHENING FISHING COMMUNITIES AND INCREASING FLEXIBILITY IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 274 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 1335.

Will the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) kindly take the chair.

□ 1831

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R.