



NCEL

National Caucus of
Environmental Legislators

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington DC 20515

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, House Speaker Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, and House Minority Leader McCarthy:

We are 139 state legislators representing 19 coastal states, and we are writing to urge Congress to include \$10 billion in funding with no matching requirements for ocean and coastal habitat restoration in future stimulus or infrastructure initiatives. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed immense budget pressure on states, threatening cuts across several sectors. Federal financial support is needed now to combat the climate and economic crisis and move forward with critical coastal restoration projects.

About 40% of the population in the United States lives in coastal states, and our coastlines are a major economic contributor nationwide, providing \$9 trillion in goods and services, employing 57.5 million people, and paying \$3.6 trillion in wages.¹ Simultaneously, coastal communities are directly impacted by the effects of climate change, including sea-level rise, increased storm events, loss of marine and coastal habitats, coastal pollution, and lost tourism. The COVID-19 pandemic has only worsened these effects.

We are encouraged by the federal government's renewed commitment to fighting climate change and Congress' commitment to providing financial support to communities across the country. Investment in coastal restoration projects would create jobs that directly stimulate the economy, restore coastal habitats, and protect coastal communities.

Healthy coastal habitats protect coastlines from storms and hurricanes and remove three to five times more carbon from the atmosphere per acre than land-based ecosystems.² Our states are home to salt marshes, seagrass meadows, mangrove forests, kelp forests, and coral reefs.³ These habitats protect our communities from the worst impact of hurricanes,⁴ and they serve as critical nursery grounds for species

¹ NOAA Office for Coastal Management

² NOAA Fisheries

³ EPA

⁴ The Ocean Foundation

in commercial and recreational fisheries.⁵ The 2020 hurricane season had the most storms and second-highest number of hurricanes on record,⁶ further intensifying the effects of degraded coastal habitats and the financial impacts of COVID-19. Investing in coastal restoration projects would not only help protect coastal habitats, it would boost the economy and protect the lives of communities that depend on the preservation of those habitats.

Coastal restoration projects would bring jobs to a broad range of the American workforce. These projects have the potential to create thousands of jobs requiring many types of labor, including construction workers, scientists, project managers, and engineers.⁷ In fact, a 2017 analysis by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) found that stimulus-supported coastal restoration projects created over 2,200 jobs (approximately 15 jobs per million invested).⁸

Our legislatures have set climate objectives, and our states have coastal restoration projects ready to proceed now. The need for federal funding to support coastal states is evident. In 2017, the National Coastal Resilience Fund received more than 167 proposals requesting over \$135 million, but it was only able to award funding to 19 projects totaling \$13.8 million.⁹

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need for federal funding. Coastal communities in our states need support to recover from the devastation caused by this pandemic and climate change. Through this \$10 billion investment, Congress can help preserve critical habitats for fisheries, protect coastal communities from severe storm events, decrease greenhouse gases, and create thousands of jobs. We are encouraged by Congress' most recent actions and urge you to make this investment to help protect our coastlines. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Former Representative Beth Kerttula
Alaska

Senator Scott Wiener
California

Representative Michelle Cook
Connecticut

Senator Bob Duff
Connecticut

Assemblymember Richard Bloom
California

Senator Christine Cohen
Connecticut

Representative Lucy Dathan
Connecticut

Representative Susan Johnson
Connecticut

⁵ NOAA

⁶ NOAA; Scientific American

⁷ NOAA Fisheries

⁸ NOAA Fisheries

⁹ NOAA Office for Coastal Management

Senator Alex Kasser
Connecticut

Representative David Michel
Connecticut

Representative Debra Heffernan
Delaware

Senator Lori Berman
Florida

Senator Kim Jackson
Georgia

Senator Nikki Merritt
Georgia

Representative Kim Schofield
Georgia

Senator Mike Gabbard
Hawaii

Senator Chris Lee
Hawaii

Representative Nicole Lowen
Hawaii

Representative Nadine Nakamura
Hawaii

Representative Lydia Blume
Maine

Representative Barbara Cardone
Maine

Representative Benjamin T. Collings
Maine

Representative Vicki Doudera
Maine

Representative Jeffrey Evangelos
Maine

Representative Jay McCreight
Maine

Senator Dave Miramant
Maine

Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey
Connecticut

Representative Mary Mushinsky
Connecticut

Representative Edward "Ed" Osienski
Delaware

Representative Becky Evans
Georgia

Representative Angelika Kausche
Georgia

Senator Nan Orrock
Georgia

Representative Della Belatti
Hawaii

Senator Gilbert Keith-Agaran
Hawaii

Representative Matthew LoPresti
Hawaii

Representative Angus McKelvey
Hawaii

Representative David Tarnas
Hawaii

Senator Cathy Breen
Maine

Senator Ben Chipman
Maine

Representative Lynn Copeland
Maine

Representative Michelle Dunphy
Maine

Representative Nicole Grohoski
Maine

Representative Genevieve McDonald
Maine

Representative Lois Reckitt
Maine

Representative Sophie Warren
Maine

Delegate Lorig Charkoudian
Maryland

Senator Brian Feldman
Maryland

Delegate Anne Healy
Maryland

Delegate Mary Lehman
Maryland

Delegate David Moon
Maryland

Delegate Lily Qi
Maryland

Delegate Jen Terrasa
Maryland

Representative Christine Barber
Massachusetts

Representative Tackey Chan
Massachusetts

State Senator Diana DiZoglio
Massachusetts

Senator James Eldridge
Massachusetts

Representative Sean Garballey
Massachusetts

Representative Tami Gouveia
Massachusetts

Representative Christopher Hendricks
Massachusetts

Representative Bradford Hill
Massachusetts

Senator Joan Lovely
Massachusetts

Senator Michael Moore
Massachusetts

Delegate Kumar Barve
Maryland

Senator Sarah Elfreth
Maryland

Delegate Jessica Feldmark
Maryland

Senator Clarence Lam m
Maryland

Delegate Brooke Lierman
Maryland

Senator Paul Pinsky
Maryland

Delegate Dana Stein
Maryland

Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins
Maryland

State Senator Mike Barrett
Massachusetts

State Representative Michelle Ciccolo
Massachusetts

State Representative Carol Doherty
Massachusetts

Representative Brandy Fluker Oakley
Massachusetts

Representative Jessica Giannino
Massachusetts

Representative Patricia Haddad
Massachusetts

Representative Natalie Higgins
Massachusetts

Representative Jack Lewis
Massachusetts

Representative Liz Miranda
Massachusetts

Representative Brian Murray
Massachusetts

Representative Tram Nguyen
Massachusetts

Representative Steve Owens
Massachusetts

Representative Maria Robinson
Massachusetts

Representative William Straus
Massachusetts

Representative Erika Uyterhoeven
Massachusetts

Senator Hillman Frazier
Mississippi

Representative Amanda Gourgue
New Hampshire

Representative Lee Oxenham
New Hampshire

Senator Cindy Rosenwald
New Hampshire

Representative Suzanne Smith
New Hampshire

Representative Judith Spang
New Hampshire

Senator Liz Krueger
New York

Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon
New York

Representative Rachel Hunt
North Carolina

Senator Julie Mayfield
North Carolina

Representative Larry Yarborough
North Carolina

Former Senator Jackie Dingfelder
Oregon

Representative Marty Wilde
Oregon

Representative Terri-Denise Cortvriend

Senator Patrick O'Connor
Massachusetts

Senator Becca Rausch
Massachusetts

Representative Lindsay Sabadosa
Massachusetts

Representative Jeffrey Rosario Turco
Massachusetts

Representative Steven Xiarhos
Massachusetts

Representative Renny Cushing
New Hampshire

Representative Rebecca McWilliams
New Hampshire

Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka
New Hampshire

Senator Tom Sherman
New Hampshire

Representative Catherine Sofikitis
New Hampshire

Senator David Watters
New Hampshire

Assemblymember John McDonald
New York

Representative John Ager
North Carolina

Representative Verla Insko
North Carolina

Representative Julie von Haefen
North Carolina

Senator Michael Dembrow
Oregon

Representative Karin Power
Oregon

Representative Liana Cassar
Rhode Island

Senator Alana DiMario

Rhode Island

Representative Susan Donovan

Rhode Island

Senator Meghan Kallman

Rhode Island

Representative David Morales

Rhode Island

Representative Teresa Tanzi

Rhode Island

Representative Bill Herbkersma

South Carolina

Delegate Elizabeth Guzman

Virginia

Delegate Kaye Kory

Virginia

Delegate Kenneth Plum

Virginia

Delegate David Reid

Virginia

Representative Debra Lekanoff

Washington

Senator Jesse Salomon

Washington

Rhode Island

Representative Barbara Ann Fenton Fung

Rhode Island

Representative Rebecca Kislak

Rhode Island

Representative Deborah Ruggiero

Rhode Island

Representative Westley Cox

South Carolina

Senator Barbara Favola

Virginia

Delegate Mark Keam

Virginia

Delegate Mark Levine

Virginia

Delegate Sam Rasoul

Virginia

Senator Scott Surovell

Virginia

Representative Dave Paul

Washington