April 1, 2009

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Subcommittee on Interior
Committee on Appropriations
B-308 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Subcommittee on Interior
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks and Ranking Member Simpson:

We appreciate your continued annual support of the National Estuary Program (NEP). We are writing to request that you continue to invest directly in the stewardship of our nation's coasts by ensuring that the authorized amount of $35 million be provided for the NEP for FY 2010, and that of these funds each of the 28 NEPs receive at least $650,000.

The NEPs are the front lines in restoring and protecting some of our most threatened and economically vital bays and estuaries. By ensuring these funds are directed to the NEPs in the field, you are investing funds that are highly leveraged to achieve results in the communities along our coasts.

The urgency of restoring and protecting our coasts and estuaries has never been greater. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, a collaborative effort between the US Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Ocean Commission underscores the widespread agreement that our oceans and marine resources are in serious trouble. The Environmental Protection Agency has recognized that "the NEP is EPA's flagship watershed protection effort. The NEP provides inclusive, community-based planning and action at the watershed level and has an established record of improvements to ecosystem conditions."

In 1987, Congress created the NEP to restore designated estuaries of national significance. There are 28 estuaries in the NEP, all of which are implementing the collaborative plans they developed for their communities and states. More than 42 percent of the continental U.S. shoreline is included in the NEP, and 15 percent of all Americans live within NEP designated watersheds, with thousands of new residents arriving every year. In the United States, estuaries provide habitat for more than 75% of America's commercial fish catch, and 80-90% of the recreational fish catch. Estuarine-dependent fisheries are among the most valuable, with an estimated worth of $1.9 billion nationwide.

We believe the NEPs should receive at least $650,000 each in order to continue ongoing work to implement their work plans and to ensure the restoration and protection of our nation's estuaries. We look forward to working with you to realize a strong and successful National Estuary Program. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Ellen O. Tauscher **Frank A. Lobiondo**

Thomas J. Rooney

Barney Frank

Henry A. Waxman

Earl Blumenauer

David Wu

Fortney Pete Stark

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