

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

We greatly appreciate your past support for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) coastal habitat restoration efforts. NOAA's coastal restoration and protection programs are on the front lines in the fight to support our nation's fisheries, keep communities resilient, create American jobs, provide critical storm protection, and promote local economies while improving coastal ecosystems and benefiting fish and wildlife.

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide \$68.4 million for NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation programs (*NOAA: ORF: National Marine Fisheries Service: Habitat Conservation and Restoration*). This funding level supports the President's budget request of \$58.4 million for Habitat Conservation and Restoration, to include a minimum of \$21.1 million for the Community-based Restoration Program, and provides \$10.0 million, level funding with FY 2016, to maintain the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants program.

Community-based Restoration Program:

NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program supports locally-driven coastal restoration projects with national, regional, and local organizations through competitively-awarded agreements. This non-regulatory tool is unique within NOAA because of its ability to provide funding for innovative projects that provide immediate and lasting benefits to coastal communities. These public-private partnerships enjoy significant stakeholder engagement and leverage non-federal resources at 3-5 times the federal investment. Restoration projects funded by CBRP improve the nation's degraded habitats while creating jobs and benefiting local economies. Improved habitat quality resulting from restoration also strengthens and revitalizes America's communities by buffering against storms, protecting vital infrastructure, reducing risks to public safety, and providing new recreational opportunities. Providing a minimum of \$21.1 million, level funding with FY 2016, will allow CBRP to maintain support for these cost-effective partnerships that benefit communities and the environment.

Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants:

NOAA's Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants, established in FY 2015, provide funding for projects that restore healthy and sustainable coastal ecosystems that benefit fish populations and build resilience of coastal communities to extreme weather, sea level rise, and flooding. We encourage the Committee to continue to support funding for Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants that fund on-the-ground habitat restoration and conservation, providing immediate ecosystem and resilience benefits to coastal communities. The inaugural funding solicitation for this program drew in nearly 60 shovel-ready projects,

demonstrating a significant need for these grants. Cutting funding for NMFS Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants would undermine communities' ability to carry out proactive projects that improve coastal resilience. As such, we request that the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants program be funded at \$10 million, equal to FY 2016 enacted funding levels.

Investments in coastal habitat restoration benefit communities not only ecologically, but also economically by creating upwards of 30 new jobs for each \$1 million invested, buoying local and regional coastal economies that generate more than half of the nation's GDP. Restoration results in cleaner water and more abundant habitat that greatly benefit local economies by increasing land values, supporting commercial fishing, improving tourism, and creating new business and recreational opportunities.

We respectfully request that you support NOAA's coastal habitat restoration and protection programs in the FY 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies bill by providing \$68.4 million for Habitat Conservation and Restoration, including a minimum of \$21.1 million for the Community-based Restoration Program and \$10 million to maintain the Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants program. Thank you for your consideration of our request and for your continued support.

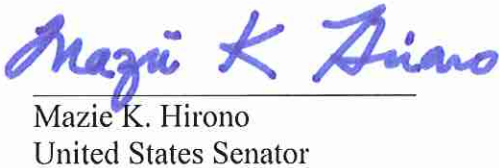
Sincerely,



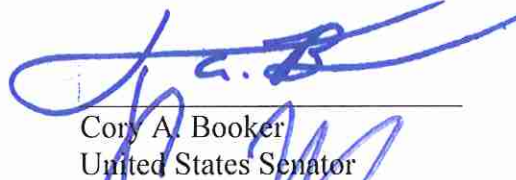
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



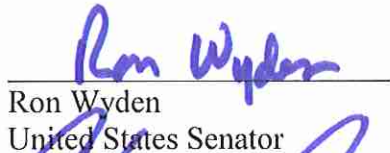
Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



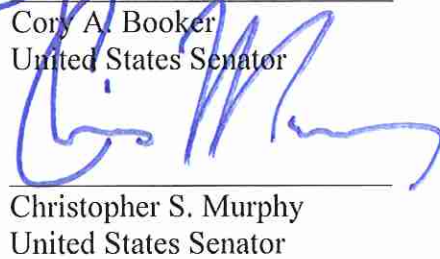
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



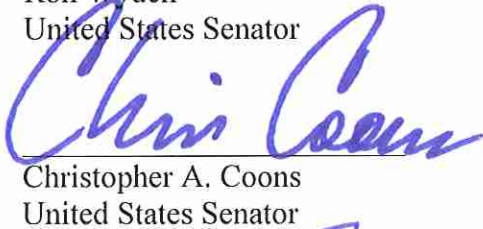
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



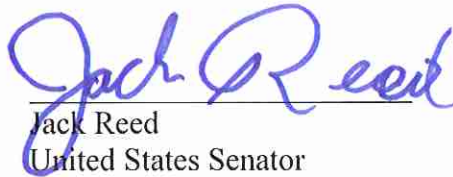
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



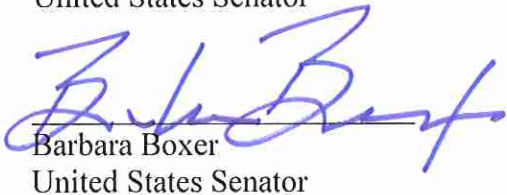
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



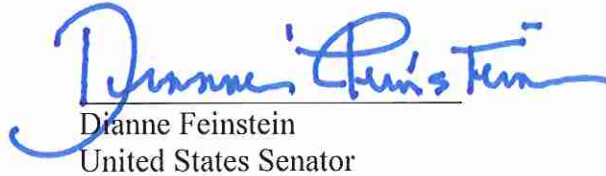
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



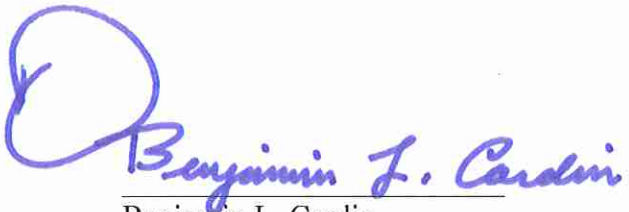
Jack Reed
United States Senator



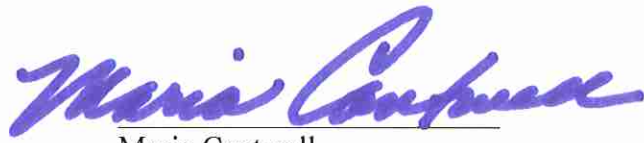
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



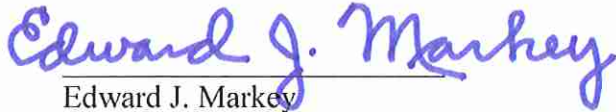
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



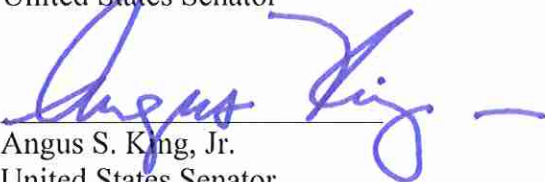
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



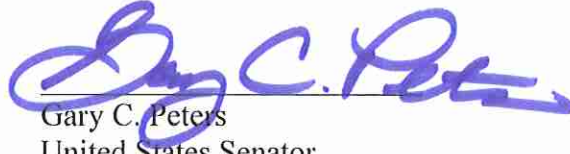
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



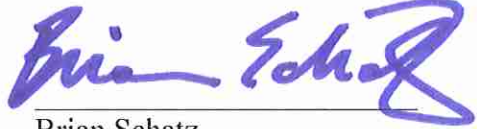
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



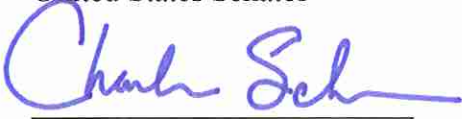
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



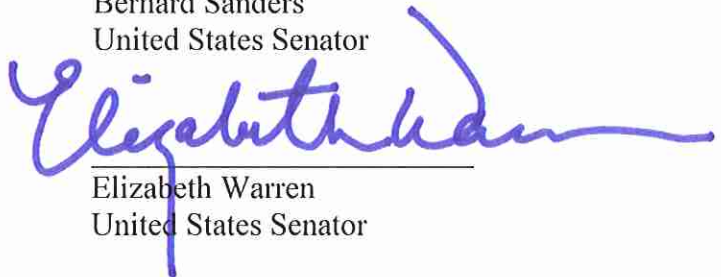
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator