

April 13, 2011

The Honorable Gary F. Locke
Secretary of Commerce
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke,

On behalf of the organizations listed below, we would like to thank you for the strong leadership you have shown in developing recommendations for a comprehensive National Ocean Policy. We are encouraged that the President, on July 19, 2010, issued an executive order adopting the recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force. Of the many recommendations put forward by the task force, our organizations are particularly encouraged by the Administration's acknowledgement that the well-being, prosperity, and security of present and future generations rests on policies that protect, maintain, and restore the health and biological diversity of our nation's coastal ecosystems.

In furtherance of our nation's coastal stewardship responsibilities, we wish to express our strong support for several programs administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that our organizations rely on to accomplish important coastal conservation and habitat restoration goals. As highlighted in the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force recommendations to the President, our nation's coastal zone is under significant pressure from increasing development and competing demands for limited coastal areas. Coastal areas house almost 153 million people, with millions more traveling to visit the nation's beaches and waterfronts each year. As growing populations increase development pressure along our coasts, NOAA's coastal programs offer essential support to communities throughout the nation that are willing to invest in the protection and restoration of land that has significant conservation, recreation, ecological, and aesthetic values.

Time and again, efforts to protect and restore the health of our coastal and riverine habitats have been shown to improve ecosystems and economies. NOAA's coastal programs are on the front lines in the fight to create American jobs and stimulate local economies while benefiting fish and wildlife and improving coastal ecosystems. The Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force noted in its final recommendations that our coastal regions account for the great majority of the national economy – totaling trillions of dollars each year – and a recent study¹ found that for each \$1 million invested in restoration, 29 new jobs are created. Public-private projects directly create jobs and benefit local and regional coastal economies that generate more than half the nation's GDP. These projects are improving lands that will be better able to filter pollutants from stormwater runoff, control flooding after storm events, provide vital nursery habitat for fish and shellfish, and create nesting and foraging habitat for coastal birds. Coastal habitats also serve as natural buffers for storm surge and hurricanes and therefore protect people and property. In addition, the resulting cleaner water and more abundant habitats will benefit local economies by improving land values, supporting recreational and commercial fishing, improving tourism, and creating new business and recreational opportunities.

¹ Fayanju, "Profiles in Restoration."

As Congress completes its work on the fiscal year 2011 budget and the decision making process regarding programmatic funding turns to the Department of Commerce, we ask that you keep the policies proposed by the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and adopted by the President in mind when determining funding allocations. Specifically, the following key programs directly benefit our coastal economies and are critical to protecting and restoring coastal and riverine habitat.

Fisheries Habitat Restoration (Open Rivers & CBRP)

NOAA's Fisheries Habitat Restoration, which includes the Community-based Restoration Program (CBRP) and Open Rivers Initiative (ORI), accomplishes on-the-ground, community-based projects to restore the nation's coastal, marine, and migratory fish habitat. As described below, these programs are essential to improving the nation's degraded coastal and riverine habitats.

Community-based Restoration Program

The Community-based Restoration Program (CBRP) provides needed scientific expertise, funding, and technical support to national and regional partners and local conservation organizations in order to restore coastal and marine habitat. By working collaboratively with more than 1,500 organizations, CBRP has funded more than 2,000 projects to restore over 65,000 acres of habitat. The program has involved more than 180,000 volunteers in projects, resulting in more than 1 million volunteer hours contributed. In addition, NOAA projects have generated approximately \$150 million in cash and in-kind contributions by using only \$65 million in NOAA funds, effectively leveraging more than double the federal investment. The program annually receives approximately \$75 million in requests from communities for restoration projects, and a demonstrated \$3 billion/800+ project backlog of ecologically and economically significant shovel-ready restoration projects currently exists.

Open Rivers Initiative

The Open Rivers Initiative (ORI) provides technical expertise and financial assistance to remove dams and other stream barriers in coastal watersheds. There are an estimated 2.5 million stream barriers in the United States. Tens of thousands of these structures are obsolete and in great disrepair but they continue to block fish—such as shad, river herring, salmon, and sturgeon—from their native spawning habitat in rivers and streams. Since its inception in 2006, ORI has removed more than 90 dams and stream blockages, re-opening more than 1,700 miles of river habitat for fish and other river animals to survive and thrive. These efforts restore healthy river ecosystems, eliminate public safety hazards, revitalize riverfront communities, provide new recreational opportunities, and improve populations of commercially and recreationally important fish. ORI has received 290 requests totaling \$77 million from communities across the country, but NOAA has only been able to address 81 projects so far due to limited funding.

Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program

Created by Congress in 2002 and formally authorized in 2009, the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) protects “those coastal and estuarine areas with significant conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, or aesthetic values, or that are threatened by conversion from their natural or recreational states to other uses.” To date, Congress has appropriated approximately \$250 million for CELCP, resulting in the

completion of over 160 conservation projects in 28 of the nation's 35 coastal states. In total, the CELCP program has helped preserve approximately 75,000 acres of America's most important coastal areas. All federal funding for CELCP is leveraged by at least an equal amount of state, local and private investments, demonstrating broad support of the program, the importance of coastal protection throughout the nation, and the critical role federal funding plays in reaching the conservation goals of the program. Over the last three years, NOAA, in partnership with the States, has identified over \$270 million of vetted and ranked projects eligible for CELCP program funding.

Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program

Through NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP), the agency acts on behalf of the public to assess, clean up, and restore coastal resources injured by oil spills, hazardous waste sites, and ship groundings on coral reefs. Through the program, NOAA effectively holds responsible parties liable for damages to the natural resources. Since 1989 NOAA and its co-trustee partners have helped clean up over 500 waste sites and collected over \$560 million from 235 NRDA case settlements for restoration of over 6,300 habitat acres. Restoration projects have included removing river blockages, creating oyster reefs, restoring oiled wetlands, and reattaching broken coral. These cleanup and restoration activities provide lasting economic and quality of life benefits for coastal communities nationwide. Recent settlements include approximately \$40 million secured for restoration of habitats in the Lower Duwamish Waterway, WA and \$27.5 million for restoration in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. Currently, DARRP is leading the Deepwater Horizon damage assessment and restoration planning in the Gulf of Mexico, the largest and most complex oil spill case in U.S. history. Appropriations funding for DARRP provides support for the up-front environmental assessment process and short-term restoration needs while NOAA works to settle each case.

Estuary Restoration Program

Authorized by Congress through the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 and reauthorized in 2007, the Estuary Restoration Act (ERA) establishes a comprehensive interagency program for the restoration of our nation's estuaries. The ERA's Estuary Habitat Restoration Council, comprised of the 5 key federal restoration agencies, is leading a coordinated approach to identify and address issues that is helping to enhance efforts to restore estuary habitat nationwide. In addition, NOAA is charged with developing and maintaining a project database that serves as a useful and cost-effective clearinghouse for all agency restoration information.

Please support NOAA's coastal habitat protection and restoration programs in the FY 2011 appropriations bill. The Community-based Restoration Program, Open Rivers Initiative, Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program, and Estuary Restoration Program are critical programs to restoring coastal and riverine habitat.

Sincerely,

Dave Sanford
Director of Navigation Policy & Legislation
American Association of Port Authorities
Alexandria, Virginia

Randi Swisher
President
American Fly Fishing Trade Association
Louisville, Colorado

Jim Bradley
Senior Director of Government Relations
American Rivers
Washington, D.C.

Karla Klay
Executive Director
Artist Boat
Galveston, Texas

Andrew Goode
Vice President, U.S. Programs
Atlantic Salmon Federation
Brunswick, Maine

Dan Stonington
Policy Director - Rural and Federal Policy
Cascade Land Conservancy
Seattle, Washington

Jana Davis, Ph.D.
Associate Executive Director
Chesapeake Bay Trust
Annapolis, Maryland

Peter R. Paden
Executive Director
Columbia Land Conservancy
Chatham, New York

Peter Shelley
Senior Counsel
Conservation Law Foundation
Boston, Massachusetts

Thomas F. Ries
President
Ecosphere Restoration Institute, Inc.
Tampa, Florida

Gus Rassam, Ph.D.
Executive Director
American Fisheries Society
Bethesda, Maryland

Tim Dillingham
Executive Director
American Littoral Society
Highlands, New Jersey

Gordon C. Robertson
Vice President
American Sportfishing Association
Alexandria, Virginia

Rich Innis
Executive Director
Association of National Estuary Programs
Washington, D.C.

Anne T. Roberts-Pierson
President
Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.
Old Mystic, Connecticut

Roy Hoagland
Vice President
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Annapolis, Maryland

Steven Peyronnin
Executive Director
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Patrick J. Hester
Chair
Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership
Washington, D.C.

Kristen Fletcher
Executive Director
Coastal States Organization
Washington, D.C.

Spencer B. Beebe
President
Ecotrust
Portland, Oregon

Peter Phippen
Coastal Coordinator
Eight Towns and the Bay Committee
Haverhill, Massachusetts

Robert Stokes
President
Galveston Bay Foundation
Webster, Texas

Phil Shephard
Executive Director
Great Land Trust
Anchorage, Alaska

Debrah Marriott
Executive Director
Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership
Portland, Oregon

Terry O'Halloran
Executive Director
Malama Kai Foundation
Kamuela, Hawaii

John Kostyack
Vice President, Wildlife Conservation
National Wildlife Federation
Reston, Virginia

Todd Miller
Executive Director
North Carolina Coastal Federation
Newport, North Carolina

Laura Rose Day
Executive Director
Penobscot River Restoration Trust
Augusta, Maine

Jeff Benoit
President and CEO
Restore America's Estuaries
Arlington, Virginia

David Lewis
Executive Director
Save The Bay – San Francisco
San Francisco, California

Valerie Cooley
President
Friends of South Slough Reserve, Inc
Charleston, Oregon

Mike Strigel
Executive Director
Gathering Waters Conservancy
Madison, Wisconsin

Troy Rice
Director
Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program
Palm Bay, Florida

Thomas Ireland
President
Maine Coast Heritage Trust
Topsham, Maine

Rebecca Roth
Executive Director
National Estuarine Research Reserve Assoc.
Wells, Maine

Peter Bahls
Director
Northwest Watershed Institute
Port Townsend, Washington

Kathy Fletcher
Executive Director
People For Puget Sound
Seattle, Washington

Franklin Nutter
President
Reinsurance Association of America
Washington, D.C.

Jonathan F. Stone
Executive Director
Save The Bay – Narragansett Bay
Providence, Rhode Island

Donald S. Strait
Executive Director
Save the Sound – CT Fund for the Environment
New Haven, Connecticut

Ned Sullivan
President
Scenic Hudson
Poughkeepsie, New York

Chris Wells
Senior Director for Strategic Projects – Policy
Society for the Protection of
New Hampshire Forests
Concord, New Hampshire

Peter Clark
President
Tampa Bay Watch
Tierra Verde, Florida

Kathy DeCoster
Vice President and
Director of Government Affairs
The Trust for Public Land
Washington, D.C.

Kameran L. Onley
Director, U.S. Marine Policy
The Nature Conservancy
Arlington, Virginia

Robert Foley
Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Town of Wells, Maine

Richard Clark
Selectman
Board of Selectman
Town of Wells, Maine

Karl Ekstedt
Selectman
Board of Selectmen
Town of Wells, Maine

Jim Spiller
Selectman
Board of Selectmen
Town of Wells, Maine

Cc: The Honorable Daniel Inouye, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Norm Dicks, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Nancy Sutley, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
Xavier Briggs, OMB, Associate Director for General Government Programs
Jennifer Werner, Acting NOAA Budget Director