

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

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

June 22, 2020

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

The health impacts, job losses, and economic destruction wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic are ongoing and unprecedented. Communities across the country have been devastated, and coastal communities in particular are under threat. Fishermen and shellfish growers cannot sell their seafood, recreational businesses such as charter captains and whale-watching vessels are tied up at the dock, and tourism-dependent communities have necessarily shut their beaches, hotels, and restaurants.

As Congress moves towards economic recovery legislation and identifies investments to be made to support businesses and communities in this extraordinarily difficult time, we urge you to consider investments in coastal communities that would benefit the blue economy. Restoring ocean and coastal habitats will help people in coastal communities get back to work, and protect and promote the safety and sustainability of those communities for the long-term.

Aiding coastal communities through investment in ocean and coastal habitats and restoration has three benefits:

1. **Restoration jobs directly stimulate the economy.** They require many types of labor from construction workers and fishermen, to planners and engineers. In 2017, a comprehensive NOAA analysis found that stimulus-supported restoration projects created over 2,200 jobs - around 15 jobs per million dollars spent. Restoration can also help put fishermen to work through efforts like NOAA's Marine Debris Program or Cooperative Research program, which pay fishermen to retrieve ghost gear or work with scientists to conduct critical research.
2. **Restoration protects coastal communities.** Though the COVID-19 pandemic is an acute threat to all people in America, the economies of coastal communities are also threatened by sea level rise and more frequent extreme weather events. The upcoming hurricane season is predicted to bring "above average" storm activity, which could

multiply the damage to coastal communities already reeling from COVID-19. Investing in restoration projects and improved natural infrastructure saves lives and money for the future. One study found that during Hurricane Sandy, coastal wetlands prevented more than \$625 million in damages by reducing flooding.

- 3. Restoration mitigates climate change and improves fisheries.** Some of the coastal ecosystems that can provide jobs and storm protection - salt marshes, seagrass beds, and mangroves - remove up to four times more carbon from the atmosphere per acre than land-based ecosystems. These and other ocean and coastal habitats like kelp forests and coral reefs serve as critical nursery grounds for many commercially important species, including salmon, striped bass, lobster, shrimp, and crabs. Investing in restoration has the potential to benefit fish stocks and create future fisheries jobs.

Most importantly, many of these projects are shovel-ready. For example, in 2017, the National Coastal Resilience Fund received more than 167 proposals requesting more than \$135 million but was able to award funding to just 19 projects totaling \$13.8 million. In 2009, NOAA received more than \$3 billion in proposals for “shovel-ready” restoration projects but had just \$167 million to spend.

By investing in coastal restoration, Congress can help coastal communities and states recover from the economic devastation created by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as reduce their need for future federal disaster expenditures from storms and fisheries failures. And most importantly, coastal restoration can immediately create jobs for the many hard-working people in America struggling to save their businesses and ways of life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Littoral Society

Audubon

Azul

Blue Frontier

Californians for Western Wilderness

Center for American Progress

Center for the Blue Economy at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Conservation International

Conservation Lands Foundation

Conservation Law Foundation

Conservation Voters of South Carolina

Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Defense Fund
Exocetus Autonomous Systems
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the San Juans
Global Ocean Health
Greenpeace USA
Hispanic Access Foundation
Inland Ocean Coalition
League of Conservation Voters
Maine Conservation Alliance
Mass Audubon
Monterey Bay Aquarium
National Ocean Protection Coalition
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
New England Aquarium
New York League of Conservation Voters
Ocean Conservancy
Ocean Conservation Research
Ocean Defense Initiative
Ocean River Institute
Oceana
Sachamama
Save the Sound
Surfrider Foundation
The Ocean Project
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
WILDCOAST
Wildlife Conservation Society