



# THE ASSOCIATION OF National Estuary Programs

Investing in a Strong, Resilient and Vibrant U.S. Coastal Economy

## Innovative Congressional Vision 30 Years of Proven Success

The National Estuary Program (NEP) was created by the U.S. Congress in Section 320 of the Clean Water Act (1987.) The foundation for program success is the Congressional vision for NEP Management Conferences: non-regulatory, science-based, consensus-driven, stakeholder-engaged and outcome-focused. Program and fiscal oversight is strong.

Twenty-eight individual estuaries and watersheds have been designated as "Estuaries of National Significance" within the National Estuary Program. The NEP network represents 29 states in the continental U.S. and San Juan Bay, Puerto Rico.

Together, NEPs represent billions of dollars in economic value and deliver future opportunities for economic growth and diversification.

NEPs guide responsible stewardship of both natural assets and human-built infrastructure to ensure that America's estuaries are healthy, prosperous, and more resilient, today and for future generations.

## Congressional Funding Needs

**THANK YOU 116<sup>th</sup> Congress**

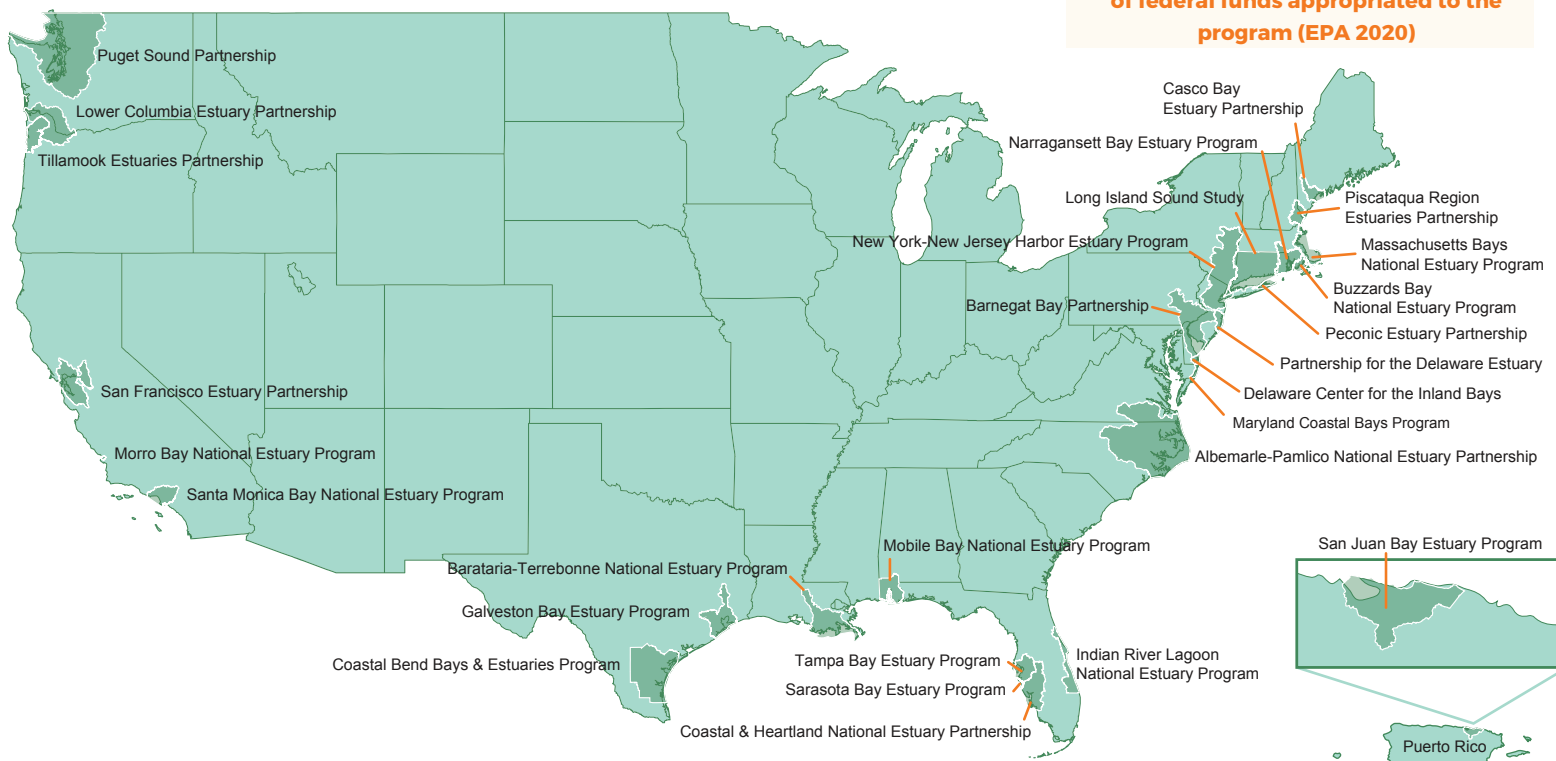
**\$50 M Congressional Authorization**  
**Expanded and focused funding for**  
**EPA competitive**  
**Watershed Grants Program**

## APPROPRIATION NEED

**Appropriation of a minimum**  
**\$1 M per program annually**

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

**On average, the NEP leverages**  
**\$22 in local, state and private-sector**  
**investment for every \$1**  
**of federal funds appropriated to the**  
**program (EPA 2020)**



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# Taking Action – Delivering Results

Annual Congressional budget appropriations provide essential federal funding for NEPs to work with their local, state and private-sector investment partners to implement the actions recommended and adopted in Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans for each watershed.



## Recover & Grow Strong Economies

The COVID-19 pandemic has delivered a historic economic challenge to our nation.

Coastal and ocean industry sectors like tourism, commercial fishing, aquaculture, ports and the cruise industry have been heavily impacted.

Coastal communities and small businesses will play an important role in recovery.

NEPs work together with local businesses and industry to encourage responsible economic development for all people and all communities in our watersheds.

Recent economic studies in NEP areas affirm that NEPs create jobs and boost local economies.

## Build Resilient Communities

Millions of Americans and businesses are vulnerable to East Coast and Gulf Coast hurricanes and other storm events.

As sea levels rise, erosion increases, coastal wetlands are lost and the vulnerability of our growing coastal populations and infrastructure are at increased risk.

America's coasts are battered by increasing storm intensity and frequency, driven by climate change.

NEPs work with federal, state and local partners to identify vulnerabilities, recommend actions and seek innovative solutions to protect life, property and commerce from sea level rise, flooding, storm surge and drought.

## Protect Natural Ecosystems Services

Tangible economic and social benefits are delivered by strong and healthy ecosystems:

- Clean air and water
- Flood and storm surge protection
- Food
- Cultural and historic connections
- Wellness and quality of life benefits for people

Natural ecosystems are essential to our health, well-being and prosperity. Wildlife and wild places are important to the heritage, culture, and heart of America.

These are national legacy gifts that we protect and endow to enrich the lives of our children and future generations.

## Reducing Nutrients And Pollutants To Surface And Groundwater

Years of inaction have allowed American infrastructure to degrade into a state of disrepair. In 2016, the American Society of Civil Engineers estimated that failing to meet U.S. infrastructure needs will result in \$3.9 trillion in losses to GDP, \$7 trillion in lost business sales, and 2.5 million lost jobs by 2025. Restoration and protection of clean and healthy surface and groundwater will require significant improvements to America's wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.

NEPs work with state and local governments and private-sector partners to reduce nutrients and other pollutants in their watersheds. NEPs provide a framework for enhanced communication, consensus-building among stakeholders and coordinated action. NEPs invest in infrastructure projects and water quality monitoring to track and reduce nutrients and other pollutant loads from impairing surface and ground waters that discharge to our estuaries.

## Understand, Monitor And Respond To Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

HABs threaten local economies, wildlife, human health and quality of life. Shellfish closures, wild or farmed fish mortalities and HAB events create consumer concerns that can impact food supply chains. The fishing industry loses as much as \$34M a year in sales when seafood is contaminated with toxins from HABs (CDC 2019). Researchers estimate \$22M is lost annually in medical costs and lost workdays during HAB events (FL Dept. of Health, 2019).

Nutrient pollution contributes to HABs. NEPs work to reduce nutrient pollution entering our waters from all sources. NEPs deliver a comprehensive approach to monitor water quality, conserve coastal habitats that remove pollution, and improve stormwater and wastewater infrastructure to reduce environmental and human-health risks from HABs.