

## **NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM**

### **Protecting and Restoring Critically Important Coastal Waterways**

#### **Why the National Estuary Program Is Important**

Coastal states are home to numerous estuaries, including bays, sounds and lagoons, where freshwater from rivers and streams mixes with salt water from the sea. Estuaries are the most biologically productive ecosystems on earth and their bounty supports tourism, fisheries and recreation. Estuary wetlands protect habitat and property from storm damage by creating natural buffers between the land and the ocean that absorb flood waters and dissipate storm surges.

- Most commercially important fish species spend part of their life cycle in estuaries. In 2014, fisheries contributed 1.4 million full- and part-time jobs and generated \$153 billion in sales, \$42 billion in income and \$64 billion in value-added impacts nationwide.
- Estuary waters serve as harbors and ports for U.S. shipping and transportation.
- Over one half of the U.S. population lives in coastal areas. As of 2012, these areas provided over 80% of all U.S. jobs and contributed \$13 trillion to the U.S. economy. Between 1997 and 2012, nearly 80% of the growth in population, jobs and gross domestic product was in coastal states.

#### **How the National Estuary Program Works**

The National Estuary Program was authorized by the 1987 Amendments to the federal Clean Water Act and reauthorized in 2016 to protect and restore water quality and ecosystems in 28 nationally significant estuarine watersheds along the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific coasts, and in Puerto Rico.

- Individual programs for each of the estuaries work with businesses, states, localities, and other partners to undertake non-regulatory projects that protect and improve coastal environments, communities and economies. They develop and implement long-term plans, called Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans, based on local priorities. For every dollar of congressional funding, estuary program partners provide \$19 dollars in financial and in-kind resources.
- Each National Estuary Program has a management group of diverse stakeholders and uses collaborative, consensus-building approaches in implementing its long-term action plan.

Estuaries protected under the National Estuary Program:

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program  
Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program  
Barnegat Bay Partnership  
Buzzards Bay National Estuary  
Casco Bay Estuary Partnership  
Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program  
Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program  
Partnership for the Delaware Estuary  
Delaware Center for the Inland Bays  
Galveston Bay Estuary Program

Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program  
Long Island Sound Study  
Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership  
Maryland Coastal Bays Program  
Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Program  
Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
Morro Bay National Estuary Program  
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program  
New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary  
Peconic Estuary Program

Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership  
Puget Sound Partnership  
San Francisco Estuary Partnership  
San Juan Bay Estuary Partnership

Sarasota Bay Estuary Program  
Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation  
Tampa Bay Estuary Program  
Tillamook Estuaries Partnership

### **Consequences if the Program Is Eliminated or Inadequately Funded**

Long-term action plans developed for each estuary have protected and restored water quality in numerous coastal waters. Actions supported by the National Estuary Program are critical to ensuring the continued improvement of water quality in these invaluable coastal waters, including:

- Reduction of nutrients, toxic substances and pathogens in coastal waters, which is needed to support healthy swimming, fishing and other recreational activities;
- Protection and restoration of millions of acres that provide habitats for coastal and marine species and support recreation and commercial fishing;
- Control and eradication of non-native species that threaten native species; and
- Information and tools that help coastal communities threatened by severe storms and tidal flooding.

### **Demonstrated Successes**

- **Barataria-Terrebonne - Louisiana:** The Barataria-Terrebonne estuary in southeast Louisiana is the fastest-disappearing landmass on earth. Major land loss has significantly reduced its ability to mitigate the impacts of storm surges; decreased sport and commercial fin fish and shellfish, animals, waterfowl and migratory bird species, which attract tourists and birders; and decreased the acreage available to naturally filter and reduce excessive nutrients, pathogens and toxic chemicals in estuary waters. The Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Program led a major effort to restore maritime forest ridges that greatly enhanced storm surge protection and added new habitat for key species. Following the 2010 BP oil spill, the program provided crucial information about oil spill impacts and mitigation efforts, and led public efforts to rescue birds and animals affected by the oil.
- **The Puget Sound - Washington:** Puget Sound on the Pacific Northwest Coast is the second-largest estuary in the U.S., extending inland to meet 19 different river basins. In Samish Bay, a sub-estuary of Puget Sound, the harvest of 4,000 acres of shellfish beds is valued at approximately \$3 million. By 2010, high levels of bacteria in the bay had forced the closure of 80% of the shellfish beds. With funding from EPA, a broad coalition of government entities, businesses and non-profit organizations identified and eliminated sources of the bacteria polluting the bay. Between 2010 and 2015, their efforts reduced fecal contamination by 80% at the sampling location closest to the shellfish beds. By 2013, 50% of the shellfish beds were open, producing critical jobs and revenue.

### **Funding for the National estuary Program/Coastal Waterways**

FY2016 Baseline Budget: \$26.723 million

FY2017 President's Budget Proposal: \$27.191 million

FY2017 Amount Appropriated: \$26.672 million

FY2018 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2018 Amount Appropriated: \$26.542 million

FY2019 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2019 Amount Appropriated: \$26.723 million

FY2020 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

**Funding for Specific Geographic Programs**

**Long Island Sound**

FY2016 Baseline Budget: \$3.940 million

FY2017 President's Budget Proposal: \$2.893 million

FY2017 Amount Appropriated: \$3.932 million

FY2018 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2018 Amount Appropriated: \$7.946 million

FY2019 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2019 Amount Appropriated: \$12.0 million

FY2020 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

**Puget Sound**

FY2016 Baseline Budget: \$28.0 million

FY2017 President's Budget Proposal: \$30.034 million

FY2017 Amount Appropriated: \$27.947 million

FY2018 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2018 Amount Appropriated: \$27.810 million

FY2019 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2019 Amount Appropriated: \$28.0 million

FY2020 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

**San Francisco Bay**

FY2016 Baseline Budget: \$4.819 million

FY2017 President's Budget Proposal: \$4.040 million

FY2017 Amount Appropriated: \$4.810 million

FY2018 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2018 Amount Appropriated: \$4.786 million

FY2019 President's Budget Proposal: \$0

FY2019 Amount Appropriated: \$4.819 million

FY2020 President's Budget Proposal: \$0