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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

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**Testimony of Congressman Bill Posey**  
**Florida's 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for the opportunity to testify today in support of the National Estuary Program.

As you may know, last year a reauthorization of the National Estuary Program (NEP) was passed unanimously through Congress, demonstrating the strong, bipartisan support for this important initiative. The NEP was first established in 1987, and since its founding, has proved to be a model for non-regulatory environmental management programs that provide tangible benefits to the communities they serve.

There are currently 28 estuaries of national significance that participate in the Program. The health of America's estuaries, like the Indian River Lagoon spanning across 5 counties in Florida—in my district and an adjacent Congressional district—is directly related to the health and vitality of our communities and national economy. In fact, these coastal ecosystems and the communities that surround them support more than 69 million U.S. jobs and contribute an estimated 7.9 trillion dollars to the GDP annually.

The genius of the NEP is that it empowers local communities to take responsibility for managing their estuaries, and brings together a diverse group of experts and concerned citizens to address threats to these delicate ecosystems. The program correctly recognizes that the people,

whose livelihoods are directly connected to protecting and restoring the health of our estuaries, are in the best position to use taxpayer money responsibly and achieve demonstrable results.

In last year's reauthorization, we improved upon this model by ensuring that the EPA spends no more than **5 percent** of appropriated funds on administrative costs at the agency. The reauthorization also directs EPA to use the savings from this reduction in federal bureaucracy to create a new competitive grant program that will provide additional resources to estuaries with urgent needs.

The money in the competitive grant program will be reserved for projects addressing threats like harmful algal blooms, invasive species, and pervasive sea grass habitat loss; problems that get exponentially worse and more expensive to fix the longer they remain untreated. For that reason, I cannot stress enough the importance of having the competitive grant program put in place in a timely manner.

The newly reauthorized program and its uniquely transparent funding allocation formula will ensure the local NEP programs get the support Congress intends, and prevent further expansion of the already bloated federal bureaucracy. In addition to fully funding the National Estuary Program, I encourage the Committee to ensure EPA officials reduce administrative costs in compliance with the reauthorization statute and begin administering the competitive grant program as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your time and continued support of the National Estuary Program.

Sincerely,



Bill Posey  
Member of Congress