

January 19, 2022

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Chair  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife  
Committee on Natural Resources  
1332 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife  
Committee on Natural Resources  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act (H.R. 4677)**

As representatives of a diverse cross-section of organizations involved across New York and New Jersey, we're writing in support of the New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act. NY-NJ Harbor and the watersheds draining into this natural and economic resource provide enormous benefits not just to the region but the entire nation.

Along with supplying clean water to some 15 million Americans living in one of the country's most densely populated and economically diverse regions, the harbor and its watersheds — including the Hudson, Mohawk, Raritan, Passaic, Hackensack, and Bronx rivers — host some of the busiest U.S. ports, provide opportunities for tourism and outdoor recreation that attract people from around the world and improve public health, sustain significant fisheries and critical wildlife habitat, and protect businesses and vital infrastructure from flooding and rising sea levels.

H.R. 4677 offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a coordinated, watershed-wide program built upon decades of efforts to restore some of the nation's most impaired and degraded waters. Federal partnerships in the watersheds of Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River, Long Island Sound, Lake Champlain, the Great Lakes, and others have successfully demonstrated how such a program can deliver direct benefits to the environment, local communities, and state economies. Notably, the grant program authorized by this legislation is directed to provide resources specifically to environmental justice communities. Maintaining a progressive cost-share formula as envisioned in the legislation is an important component of building an equitable and just watershed grants program. Our organizations stand ready to implement projects and deliver tangible benefits to communities within our region.

These waterways play a critical role in enhancing Americans' quality of life, health, and prosperity, and in restoring communities disproportionately challenged by climate change. Local partnerships are strong and regional priorities have been established through dozens of science-based, consensus-driven plans to manage these natural resources and protect fish and wildlife habitats, improve water quality, increase public access to the water, mitigate flood risks, and develop public outreach and educational activities. In addition to helping to implement these locally approved plans, federal leadership, coordination, and resources will amplify their impacts by promoting collaboration that will ensure on-the-ground public benefits span the entire region.

The NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act is vitally important to the region's future. We thank you for taking the time to review our comments and urge you to support H.R. 4677.

Sincerely,

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The Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chair, Committee on Natural Resources

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The Honorable Paul Tonko, Member, Committee on Natural Resources