June 16, 2022

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Chairperson
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairperson Huffman, and all Members of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife:

On behalf of our members and supporters, and San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve's 95,000 visitors in 2021, Nature Collective writes to express support for the Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act being heard before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife.

Nature Collective supports the Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act, which would expand the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, a network of 30 coastal sites on 1.4 million acres that are set up to protect and study estuaries: places where river mouths meet tidal water, like the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve that Nature Collective co-manages.

Since 1987, Nature Collective, a nonprofit organization located in Encinitas, California (Congressional District 49) with a mission to drive a passion for nature for all, has been a leader in the protection of wetlands throughout Southern California. We have collaborated and used critical data that was funded by the National Estuarine Research Reserve system to further our abilities to design and implement dozens of restoration projects including the recently completed San Elijo Lagoon Restoration project. This project enhanced tidal flow of San Elijo Lagoon, provided sea-level rise stepping stones for current and future species, and created new mud flats for birds and mammals of many species.

With one of the most extensive wetlands restorations in California complete, Nature Collective will monitor through the next 50 years—ensuring that what we designed works as sea levels rise and our climate changes. Our restoration, marine, and near-shore monitoring efforts include conducting one of the most comprehensive surf monitoring studies pre-and post- sand replenishment in California by monitoring the effects of beach replenishment using dredged lagoon sands and lagoon restoration.
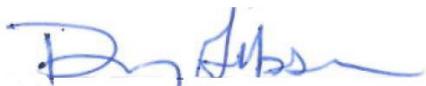
This project plays a key role in achieving and combating the climate and extinction crisis. Nature Collective protects the diverse riparian, upland and wetlands that provides habitat for migratory birds, and wildlife in the Pacific Flyway, including the federally endangered Ridgeway's Rail, Western Snowy Plover and California Least Tern. The Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act would provide more effective protection and important habitat for this wildlife.

Nature Collective strongly supports the passage of Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act of 2022, sponsored by U.S. Representatives Mike Levin and Brian Mast. This bipartisan legislation would reauthorize the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program first authorized in 1972 to address funding needs of land in coastal ecosystems and wetlands and add provisions for ecological restoration and protection for coastal communities. Since 2002, the program has protected over 110,000 acres of coastal land. The legislation gives funding priority to communities that don't have the resources to prepare for the coastal effects of climate change, which can include sea level rise, flooding and ecological damage. It also prioritizes sites that could mitigate the effects of climate change through "blue carbon storage," which refers to the cultivation of wetlands, kelp forests and seagrass beds to capture carbon in natural systems. And it sets up critical monitoring requirements to track the impacts of climate change on estuaries and other water bodies.

Nature Collective strongly supports reauthorization of this essential program, and we urge the Committee to advance this legislation.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Doug Gibson, Executive Director + Principal Scientist
Nature Collective