

August 2, 2023

The Honorable Cliff Bentz, Chair
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

National and Regional Organizations Support the Bipartisan New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act (H.R. 2982 / S. 1335)

Dear Chairman Bentz and Ranking Member Huffman,

As representatives of organizations nationwide as well as in New York and New Jersey, we support H.R. 2982 / S. 1335, the New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act (NYNJWPA). This year provides a historic opportunity to authorize the NYNJWPA and ensure that communities across the New York-New Jersey region have the opportunity to collaborate with the federal government to advance local watershed management that many other regions have benefited from for decades.

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 other storm-related damages. Additionally, the NYNJWPA will provide critical support for rural communities across the region by providing funding to support local public access and wildlife management plans. The conservation of this watershed is especially critical as the home to millions of Americans and significant economic activity; in addition to ensuring a healthy and resilient ecosystem, and promoting jobs for the family-owned businesses equipped to do habitat restoration work, it is critical to secure and improve public access for outdoor recreationists including sportsmen and women.

The NYNJWPA 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 will match local funds and leverage additional resources to assist communities lacking in environmental justice, as well as the small, rural communities that are critical to the economic and environmental well-being of the watershed.

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 New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act is essential to the recovery of the region's water, economic well-being, wildlife, and communities. We strongly support the passage of this legislation and urge Senators and Representatives to move this legislation forward during the 118th Congress.

Scenic Hudson

Riverkeeper

Boone and Crockett Club

Engineers Labor-Employer Cooperative Local 825: The Operating Engineers & Contractors Trust

Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

Mississippi River Trust

New Jersey Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

New York Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

NY-NJ Baykeeper

The Nature Conservancy of New York

The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey