



National and
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March 19, 2024

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Chair
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries

RE: Audubon Support for HR 1395 and HR 7020

Dear Chair Bentz and Ranking Member Huffman:

On behalf of the National Audubon Society, thank you for holding a legislative hearing on H.R. 1395, the *Delaware River Basin Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2023* and H.R. 7020, the *Great Lakes Mapping Act*. These bills are critical to advancing bipartisan conversation solutions for the Delaware River watershed and the Great Lakes.

H.R. 1395 will reauthorize the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program (DRBRP) through 2030 and empower small, rural, and disadvantaged communities to protect their local environment through a reduced match requirement of 10%. The bill also offers the Secretary of the Interior the ability to waive all cost-share requirements in cases of significant financial hardship. These changes will ensure that these communities can engage in conservation projects and access federal funds more equitably. The Delaware River Watershed encompasses a complex system of forests, rivers, marshes, and urban landscapes stretching 13,500 square miles and 2,000 rivers across the five basin states of Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Maryland. The watershed provides drinking water to over 14 million people, critical habitat for a diverse ecosystem of birds and other wildlife, and a robust tourism and outdoor recreation economy. The DRBRP, administered by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, champions federal-local collaboration and critical on-the-ground projects in the Delaware River Watershed that conserve and restore this irreplaceable natural resource.

H.R. 7020 would direct the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to conduct high-resolution mapping of the lakebeds of the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes serve as the drinking water source for more than 42 million people and provide a rich aquatic habitat supporting a \$7 billion annual fishing industry and Great Lakes recreation that draws millions of tourists who boost the economies of our communities. Millions of migratory birds depend on coastal habitats along the Great Lakes for shelter, rest, and nourishment for their long journeys and thousands of raptors, waterfowl, and wetland birds rely on the Great Lakes systems for safe nesting grounds. High-resolution mapping of the lakebeds of the Great Lakes will help provide new scientific and technical information to support ongoing restoration of the Great Lakes.

Audubon is grateful that these critical watersheds are receiving federal attention and support. Thank you again for holding a hearing on the *Delaware River Watershed Conservation Reauthorization Act of 2023* and the *Great Lakes Mapping Act* and we urge a favorable report from the committee.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Caitlin Wall".

Caitlin Wall
Director, Water Policy
National Audubon Society