

Responses to Questions from Rep. Levin

1. I appreciate that in your testimony, you discuss how programs like the Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System help to manage and conserve estuaries across the country. Can you share more about how hunters and fishers benefit from these coastal conservation programs?

The Coastal Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) and National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) are vital programs to manage and conserve estuaries throughout the country. Estuaries are important spawning and nursery habitats for a wide range of sportfish species, so conserving and providing responsible public access to them provide significant benefits for recreational fishing. Since 2002, CELCP has conserved over 110,000 acres of coastal and estuarine land, in partnership with states providing an equivalent non-federal funding match. The stewardship, monitoring, research, training and education that occurs throughout the NERRS provides social, economic, and environmental benefits – particularly toward outdoor recreation – that far exceed their cost of operation.

2. Will the establishment of new research reserves limit hunting and fishing in coastal areas?

Section 2(j) of H.R. 6841 requires that fishing, hunting and cultural uses be allowed unless explicitly prohibited in a management plan. Currently 90% of research reserves allow recreational fishing and 75% allow hunting. Any restrictions would need to be based on sound, scientific reasoning.