September 2, 2025

Honorable Rep. Harriet Hageman
Chair, Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
1227 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Rep. Val Hoyle
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: September 3 Subcommittee Hearing on HR4256 To Reauthorize the Digital Coast Act

Dear Chair Hageman, Vice Chair Ezell, Ranking Member Hoyle, and Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries,

The Surfrider Foundation ("Surfrider") writes to provide our strong support for HR4256 *The Digital Coast Reauthorization Act of 2025*, before the Subcommittee during September 3rd's hearing. Digital Coast is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA") to better inform coastal communities and managers and protect coastal ecosystems from the impacts of coastal hazards and sea level rise.

Digital Coast ("Program") is a platform that collates and disseminates critical geospatial data, decision making tools, training, and best practices for coastal states, managers, and communities to address and respond to pressing coastal management needs. This includes national level coastal datasets visualizing future sea level rise projections, coastal flood risk and exposure, and socioeconomic impacts to inform vulnerability assessments. In addition to critical datasets, the program hosts a repository of learning resources and case studies through the Digital Coast Academy emphasizing adaptation and nature-based solutions for coastal resilience in coastal and Great Lakes counties. The program not only focuses on supporting resilient coastal ecosystems and habitats, but also enhancing economic growth in coastal areas.Digital Coast is currently authorized at $4 million per year through 2025.

Our coastlines, and the people and communities who rely on them, are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise and coastal flooding. Our beaches alone are worth over $520 billion.[1] They are the lifeblood of countless communities, supporting livelihoods and lifeways throughout our coastal areas and Great Lakes. Over the past several years, our coasts have experienced a marked increase in coastal flooding and storm events. Whether it is the extreme rain events inundating the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic, major hurricanes devastating

[1] https://asbpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/92_2_houston_color.pdf

communities from Florida to North Carolina, or increases in 'sunny-day' flooding, our coasts are experiencing significant impacts from coastal hazards.

The losses incurred by coastal communities and governments, including the federal government, and costs of flooding events and sea level rise is growing. The total cost of flooding in the U.S. is estimated between $179.8 to $496 billion each year.[2] Preparing for future sea level rise is expected to cost U.S. coastal communities nearly $1 trillion by 2100.[3] Given the projected costs and losses due to hazards in coastal areas, decision makers need every tool available to them to inform risk exposure and make appropriate investments to protect their local ecosystems, communities, and economies. Digital Coast is one of the best and most cost effective tools for coastal decision makers. According to NOAA, the program is expected to yield a net benefit of $117 million by 2028, equating to a return on investment of 411% under current funding levels.[4] As the impacts and costs of flooding, sea level rise, and other coastal hazards increase due to climate change, so too will the value of the tools and data provided under this program.

In addition to supporting resilient coastal communities and economies with crucial coastal hazard risk and exposure data and mapping services, Digital Coast provides important information on how communities can better assess vulnerability and adapt to future projected changes. In particular, the program provides resources on identifying solutions that are site-specific and led by the local community, and elevate green infrastructure and nature-based solutions to coastal hazards and impacts. Nature-based solutions are preferred over hard armoring or an over-reliance on short-lived adaptation measures such as beach renourishment, which are costly, unsustainable and can have adverse impacts on beaches and coastal ecosystems. The program provides invaluable resources to educate coastal managers and communities about the benefits of nature-based solutions to coastal challenges and opportunities for implementation on the local level.

As our coastal ecosystems, economies, and communities experience greater risks of coastal hazards along our shores, Digital Coast is a cost-effective program that provides an array of tools, training, and information to decision makers and coastal managers to implement solutions, policies, and projects that best protect their treasured coastal ecosystems and communities.

Thank you for your consideration of reauthorizing this critical program for protecting our coastlines, nearby communities, and the economies that rely on them.

Sincerely,

Emma Haydocy
Surfrider Foundation
Senior Manager of Coasts and Climate

[2] https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/bc171a7e-2829-462d-8193-7b7c4d59a6e3/jec-report-on-economic-cost-of-flooding.pdf
[3] https://www.science.org/content/article/climate-change-could-cost-us-coasts-1-trillion-2100
[4] https://coast.noaa.gov/data/digitalcoast/pdf/digitalcoast-overview.pdf