

[DISCUSSION DRAFT]

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To establish an Interagency Working Group on Coastal Blue Carbon, and
for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. BONAMICI introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on _____

A BILL

To establish an Interagency Working Group on Coastal Blue
Carbon, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Blue Carbon for Our
5 Planet Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.**

7 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The National Science and
8 Technology Council Subcommittee on Ocean Science and

1 Technology shall establish an Interagency Working Group
2 on Coastal Blue Carbon.

3 (b) PURPOSES.—The Interagency Working Group on
4 Coastal Blue Carbon shall oversee the development of a
5 national map of coastal blue carbon ecosystems, establish
6 national coastal blue carbon ecosystem protection and res-
7 toration priorities, assess the biophysical, social, and eco-
8 nomic impediments to coastal blue carbon ecosystem res-
9 toration, study the effects of climate change, environ-
10 mental stressors, and human stressors on carbon seques-
11 tration rates, and preserve the continuity of coastal blue
12 carbon data.

13 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Interagency Working Group
14 on Coastal Blue Carbon shall be comprised of senior rep-
15 resentatives from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
16 Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the
17 National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics
18 and Space Administration, the United States Geological
19 Survey, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the
20 National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the
21 Smithsonian Institution, the Army Corps of Engineers,
22 the Department of Agriculture, the Department of En-
23 ergy, the Department of Defense, the Department of
24 Transportation, the Department of State, the Federal

1 Emergency Management Agency, and the Council on En-
2 vironmental Quality.

3 (d) CHAIR.—The Interagency Working Group shall
4 be chaired by the Administrator.

5 (e) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Interagency Working
6 Group shall—

7 (1) oversee the development, update, and main-
8 tenance of a national map and inventory of coastal
9 blue carbon ecosystems, including habitat types with
10 a regional focus in analysis that is usable for local
11 level protection planning and restoration;

12 (2) develop a strategic assessment of the bio-
13 physical, chemical, social, statutory, regulatory, and
14 economic impediments to protection and restoration
15 of coastal blue carbon ecosystems;

16 (3) develop a national strategy for foundational
17 science necessary to study, synthesize, and evaluate
18 the effects of climate change, environmental, and
19 human stressors on sequestration rates and capabili-
20 ties of coastal blue carbon ecosystems protection;

21 (4) establish national coastal blue carbon eco-
22 system protection and restoration priorities, includ-
23 ing an assessment of current Federal funding being
24 used for restoration efforts;

1 (5) ensure the continuity, use, and interoper-
2 ability of data assets through the Smithsonian Envi-
3 ronmental Research Center's Coastal Carbon Data
4 Clearinghouse; and

5 (6) assess current legal authorities to protect
6 and restore blue carbon ecosystems.

7 (f) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year
9 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
10 Interagency Working Group shall provide to the
11 Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the
12 House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural
13 Resources of the House of Representatives, and the
14 Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transpor-
15 tation of the Senate a report containing the fol-
16 lowing:

17 (A) A summary of federally funded coastal
18 blue carbon ecosystem research, monitoring,
19 preservation, and restoration activities, includ-
20 ing the budget for each of these activities and
21 describe the progress in advancing the national
22 priorities established in section 4(a)(4)(A).

23 (B) An assessment of biophysical, social,
24 and economic impediments to coastal blue car-
25 bon ecosystem restoration, including the vulner-

1 ability of coastal blue carbon ecosystems to cli-
2 mate impacts, such as sea-level rise, ocean and
3 coastal acidification, and other environmental
4 and human stressors.

5 (2) STRATEGIC PLAN.—

6 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Interagency Work-
7 ing group shall create a strategic plan for Fed-
8 eral investments in basic research, development,
9 demonstration, long-term monitoring and stew-
10 ardship, and deployment of coastal blue carbon
11 ecosystem projects for the 5-year period begin-
12 ning at the start of the first fiscal year after
13 the date on which the budget assessment is sub-
14 mitted under paragraph (1). The plan shall in-
15 clude an assessment of the use of existing Fed-
16 eral programs to protect and preserve coastal
17 blue carbon ecosystems and identify the need
18 for any additional authorities or programs.

19 (B) TIMING.—The Interagency Working
20 Group shall—

21 (i) submit the strategic plan under
22 paragraph (A) to the Committee on
23 Science, Space, and Technology of the
24 House of Representatives, the Committee
25 on Natural Resources of the House of Rep-

1 representatives, and the Committee on Com-
2 merce, Science, and Transportation of the
3 Senate on a date that is not later than one
4 year after the enactment of this Act and
5 not earlier than the date on which the re-
6 port under paragraph (1) is submitted to
7 such committees of Congress; and

8 (ii) submit a revised version of such
9 plan not less than quinquennially there-
10 after.

11 (C) FEDERAL REGISTER.—Not later than
12 90 days before the strategic plan under this
13 paragraph, or any revision thereof, is submitted
14 under subparagraph (B), the Interagency
15 Working Group shall publish such plan in the
16 Federal Register and provide an opportunity for
17 submission of public comments for a period of
18 not less than 60 days.

19 **SEC. 3. NATIONAL MAP OF COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECO-**
20 **SYSTEMS.**

21 (a) NATIONAL MAP.—The Interagency Working
22 Group shall—

23 (1) produce, update at least once every five
24 years, and maintain a national level map and inven-
25 tory of coastal blue carbon ecosystems, including—

1 (A) the species and types of habitats and
2 species in the ecosystem;

3 (B) the condition of such habitats includ-
4 ing whether a habitat is degraded, drained, eu-
5 trophic, or tidally restricted;

6 (C) type of public or private ownership and
7 any protected status;

8 (D) the size of the ecosystem;

9 (E) the salinity boundaries;

10 (F) the tidal boundaries;

11 (G) an assessment of carbon sequestration
12 potential, methane production, and net green-
13 house gas reductions including consideration
14 of—

15 (i) quantification;

16 (ii) verifiability;

17 (iii) comparison to a historical base-
18 line, as available; and

19 (iv) permanence of those benefits;

20 (H) an assessment of cobenefits of eco-
21 system and carbon sequestration;

22 (I) the potential for landward migration as
23 a result of sea level rise;

1 (J) any upstream restrictions detrimental
2 to the watershed process and conditions such as
3 dams, dikes, and levees;

4 (K) the conversion of coastal blue carbon
5 ecosystems to other land uses and the cause of
6 such conversion; and

7 (L) a depiction of the effects of climate
8 change, including sea level rise, environmental
9 stressors, and human stressors on the seques-
10 tration rate, carbon storage, and potential of
11 coastal blue carbon ecosystems; and

12 (2) in carrying out paragraph (1)—

13 (A) incorporate, to the extent possible, ex-
14 isting data collected through federally funded
15 research and by a Federal agency, State agen-
16 cy, local agency, Tribe, including data collected
17 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
18 Administration Coastal Change Analysis Pro-
19 gram, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National
20 Wetlands Inventory, United States Geological
21 Survey LandCarbon program, Federal Emer-
22 gency Management Agency LiDAR information
23 coordination and knowledge program, Depart-
24 ment of Energy Biological and Environmental
25 Research program, and Department of Agri-

1 culture National Coastal Blue Carbon Assess-
2 ment; and

3 (B) engage regional technical experts in
4 order to accurately account for regional dif-
5 ferences in coastal blue carbon ecosystems.

6 (b) USE.—The Interagency Working Group shall use
7 the national map and inventory—

8 (1) to assess the carbon sequestration potential
9 of different coastal blue carbon habitats, and ac-
10 count for any regional differences;

11 (2) to assess and quantify emissions from de-
12 graded and destroyed coastal blue carbon eco-
13 systems;

14 (3) to develop regional assessments and to pro-
15 vide technical assistance to regional, State, Tribal,
16 and local government agencies, and regional infor-
17 mation coordination entities as defined in section
18 123030(6) of the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Ob-
19 servation System Act (33 U.S.C. 3602);

20 (4) to assess degraded coastal blue carbon eco-
21 systems and their potential for restoration, including
22 developing scenario modeling to identify vulnerable
23 areas where management, protection, and restora-
24 tion efforts should be focused;

1 (5) produce future predictions of coastal blue
2 carbon ecosystems and carbon sequestration rates in
3 the context of climate change, environmental
4 stressors, and human stressors; and

5 (6) use such map to inform the Administrator
6 of the Environmental Protection Agency's creation
7 of the annual Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas
8 Emissions and Sinks.

9 **SEC. 4. RESTORATION AND PROTECTIONS FOR EXISTING**
10 **COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEMS.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall—

12 (1) lead the Interagency Working Group in im-
13 plementing the strategic plan under section 2(e)(2);

14 (2) coordinate monitoring and research efforts
15 among Federal agencies in cooperation with State,
16 local, and Tribal government and international part-
17 ners and nongovernmental organizations;

18 (3) establish a national goal for conserving
19 ocean and coastal blue carbon ecosystems within the
20 territory of the United States, and as appropriate
21 setting targets for restoration of degraded coastal
22 blue carbon ecosystems;

23 (4) in coordination with the Interagency Work-
24 ing Group and as informed by the report under sec-

1 tion 2(e) on current Federal expenditures on coastal
2 blue carbon ecosystem restoration, identify—

3 (A) national coastal blue carbon ecosystem
4 protection and restoration priorities that would
5 produce the highest rate of carbon sequestra-
6 tion and greatest ecosystem benefits such as
7 flood protection, soil and beach retention, ero-
8 sion reduction, biodiversity, water purification,
9 and nutrient cycling in the context of other en-
10 vironmental stressors and climate change; and

11 (B) ways to improve coordination and to
12 prevent unnecessary duplication of effort among
13 Federal agencies and departments with respect
14 to research on coastal blue carbon ecosystems
15 through existing and new coastal management
16 networks; and

17 (5) in coordination with State, local, and Tribal
18 governments and coastal stakeholders, develop inte-
19 grated pilot programs to restore degraded coastal
20 blue carbon ecosystems in accordance with sub-
21 section (b).

22 (b) INTEGRATED PILOT PROGRAMS TO RESTORE
23 AND PROTECT DEGRADED COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECO-
24 SYSTEMS.—In carrying out subsection (a)(5), the Admin-
25 istrator shall—

1 (1) establish integrated pilot programs that de-
2 velop best management practices, including design
3 criteria and performance functions for coastal blue
4 carbon ecosystem restoration and protection, nature-
5 based adaptation strategies, restoration areas that
6 intersect with the built environments as green-gray
7 infrastructure projects, management practices for
8 landward progression or migration of coastal blue
9 carbon ecosystems, and identify potential barriers to
10 restoration efforts, and increase long-term carbon
11 sequestration and storage;

12 (2) ensure that the pilot programs cover geo-
13 graphically and ecologically diverse locations with
14 significant ecological, economic, and social benefits,
15 such as flood protection, soil and beach retention,
16 erosion reduction, biodiversity, water purification,
17 and nutrient cycling to reduce hypoxic conditions,
18 and maximum potential for greenhouse gas emission
19 reduction;

20 (3) establish a procedure for reviewing applica-
21 tions for the pilot program, taking into account—

22 (A) quantification;

23 (B) verifiability;

24 (C) additionality as compared to a histor-
25 ical baseline, when feasible; and

1 (D) permanence of those benefits;

2 (4) ensure, through consultation with the Inter-
3 agency Working Group, that the goals and metrics
4 for the pilot programs are communicated to the ap-
5 propriate State, Tribe, and local governments, and
6 to the general public;

7 (5) coordinate with relevant Federal agencies
8 on the Interagency Working Group to prevent un-
9 necessary duplication of effort among Federal agen-
10 cies and departments with respect to restoration and
11 protection programs;

12 (6) give priority to proposed eligible restoration
13 activities that would—

14 (A) result in long-term protection and se-
15 questration of carbon stored in coastal and ma-
16 rine environments; and

17 (B) protect key habitats for fish, wildlife,
18 and the maintenance of biodiversity;

19 (C) provide coastal protection from devel-
20 opment, storms, flooding, and land-based pollu-
21 tion;

22 (D) protect coastal resources of national,
23 historical, and cultural significance; and

1 (E) benefit communities of color, low-in-
2 come communities, Tribal or Indigenous com-
3 munities, or rural communities; and

4 (7) report to the Interagency Working Group,
5 and Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
6 of the House of Representatives, the Committee on
7 Natural Resources of the House of Representatives,
8 and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and
9 Transportation of the Senate on the total number of
10 acres of land or water protected or restored through
11 the program, the status of restoration projects, and
12 the blue carbon sequestration potential of each res-
13 toration pilot project.

14 **SEC. 5. COASTAL CARBON DATA CLEARINGHOUSE.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Smithso-
16 nian, in coordination with the Administrator and members
17 of the Interagency Working Group, shall provide for the
18 long-term stewardship of, and access to, data relating to
19 coastal blue carbon ecosystems and national mapping, by
20 supporting the maintenance of the Coastal Carbon Data
21 Clearinghouse.

22 (b) COASTAL CARBON DATA CLEARINGHOUSE DU-
23 TIES.—Acting through the Coastal Carbon Data Clearing-
24 house, the Secretary of the Smithsonian in coordination
25 with the Administrator and members of the Interagency

1 Working Group shall process, store, archive, provide ac-
2 cess to, and incorporate to the extent possible, all data
3 collected through federally funded research by a Federal
4 agency, State, local agency, Tribe, academic scientist, or
5 any other relevant entity.

6 (c) GLOBAL AND NATIONAL DATA ASSETS.—The
7 Secretary of the Smithsonian in coordination with the Ad-
8 ministrator and members of the Interagency Working
9 Group shall ensure that existing global and national data
10 assets are incorporated into the Coastal Carbon Data
11 Clearinghouse to the greatest extent possible.

12 (d) ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS, PROTOCOLS,
13 AND PROCEDURES.—The Secretary of the Smithsonian in
14 coordination with the Administrator and members of the
15 Interagency Working Group, shall establish standards,
16 protocols, and procedures for the processing, storing,
17 archiving, and providing access to data in the Coastal Car-
18 bon Data Clearinghouse and best practices for sharing
19 such data with State, local, and Tribal governments,
20 coastal stakeholders, non-Federal resource managers, and
21 academia. The Administrator shall work to disseminate
22 such data to the greatest extent practicable.

23 (e) DIGITAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES.—The Sec-
24 retary of the Smithsonian, in coordination with the Ad-
25 ministrator and members of the Interagency Working

1 Group, shall develop digital tools and resources to support
2 the public use of the Coastal Carbon Data Clearinghouse.

3 **SEC. 6. NAS ASSESSMENT OF CONTAINMENT OF CARBON**
4 **DIOXIDE IN DEEP SEAFLOOR ENVIRONMENT.**

5 Not later than 90 days after the date of the enact-
6 ment of this Act, the Administrator shall seek to enter
7 into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences
8 to conduct a comprehensive assessment on the long-term
9 effects of geologic stores of carbon dioxide in a deep
10 seafloor environment, including impacts on marine species
11 and ecosystems.

12 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

13 There are authorized to be appropriated to the Na-
14 tional Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to carry
15 out this Act \$15,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2022
16 through 2026.

17 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

18 In this Act:

19 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-
20 trator” means the Under Secretary of Commerce for
21 Oceans and Atmosphere in the Under Secretary’s
22 capacity as the Administrator of the National Oce-
23 anic and Atmospheric Administration.

24 (2) COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEM.—The
25 term “coastal blue carbon ecosystem” refers to vege-

1 tated coastal habitats including mangroves, tidal
2 marshes, seagrasses, kelp forests, and other tidal,
3 freshwater, or salt-water wetlands, and their ability
4 to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, accumu-
5 late it in biomass for years to decades, and store it
6 in soils for centuries to millennia. Coastal blue car-
7 bon ecosystems include both autochthonous carbon
8 and allochthonous carbon.

9 (3) STATE.—The term “State” means each
10 State of the United States, the District of Columbia,
11 the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American
12 Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern
13 Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands of the United
14 States, and any other territory or possession of the
15 United States.