



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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A.G. "Spud" Woodward (GA), Chair Joseph Cimino (NJ), Vice-Chair Robert E. Beal, Executive Director

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

August 8, 2022

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0303

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0404

Dear Chair Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman,

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) is pleased to support H.R. 7801, the Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act.

The Commission is a Compact of the 15 Atlantic coastal states that manages nearshore marine fisheries which occupy multiple states' waters. Congress approved the Compact in 1942, and granted the Commission management authority in 1984 and 1993 through the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, respectively. Today, the Commission manages 27 of the coast's most productive and iconic fisheries, nine of which are cooperatively managed with our federal partners.

H.R. 7801 would enshrine the Coastal and Estuarine Lands Conservation Program (CELCP) in statute and redesignate it as the Coastal and Estuarine Resilience and Restoration Program (CERRP). CELCP grants have historically provided important resources to state and local governments for property acquisition to protect coastal ecosystems and wetlands. The Commission appreciates the prioritization of projects that will mitigate "the adverse effects of climate change, including through the storage of blue carbon, and to facilitate inland migration of coastal ecosystems in response to sea level rise." Additionally, the Commission supports provisions that would allow the restoration of developed property in vulnerable coastal and estuarine areas.

Seventeen of the 30 designated National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRS) are located in Commission Member States. The Commission appreciates the cooperative management of the reserves between states, universities, and NOAA's Office for Coastal Management and strongly supports the mandate for long-term coordination, tracking and modeling of the impacts of climate change on estuarine systems.

Modern science demands that state and federal marine resource managers utilize ecosystem level solutions for the sustainable management of marine fisheries, especially for diadromous fish that spend part of their lifecycle in freshwater rivers and part in the marine environment. Incorporating shore-side habitat considerations into marine fisheries management decisions is critical as changing nearshore habitats are increasingly affecting the long-term sustainability of the nation's diadromous fisheries.

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Both programs considered by H.R. 7801 represent a coordinated approach to marine resource conservation by state, federal, and regional entities – something the Commission has long supported. Finally, the Commission emphasizes that user conflicts should be considered when establishing and defining the boundaries of new National Estuarine Research Reserves in order to best balance the current and future economic benefits of our nation’s marine resources.

I hope you will join us in supporting this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. E. Beal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R" being particularly large and stylized.

Robert. E. Beal