

December 15, 2011

Dear Long Island Sound Congressional Caucus:

On behalf of the following organizations working to protect and restore Long Island Sound, we write to you today in strong support of the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act. This measure is essential to advancing critically important water quality restoration and habitat protection efforts in Long Island Sound, an Estuary of National Significance. .

Across the nation, our important water ecosystems like Long Island Sound are under constant threat from pollution and habitat loss. We face a massive backlog of projects to clean up and restore these important engines of our regional and national economy. In particular, for Long Island Sound, federal funding and coordination between agencies is desperately needed to put people to work reaching the goals of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) that has been developed by the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Long Island Sound Study (LISS).

Long Island Sound is a national treasure whose watershed covers all or part of six states. Because of its significant and unique ecological and economic value, the Sound was one of the first three estuaries recognized in 1985 under the National Estuary Program. The Sound contributes more than \$8 billion per year to the regional economy from commercial and recreational fishing, ecotourism and other water dependent businesses. More than 28 million people, or nearly 10 percent of the population of the United States, live within 50 miles of Long Island Sound, and the resultant development has led to increasingly poor ecosystem health.

In recognition of the Sound's importance, and to target federal funding toward the most pressing needs identified in the CCMP, Congress has enacted two important authorizations: the Long Island Sound Restoration Act (first authorized in 2000 and again in 2005) that provides up to \$40 million per year for projects to create jobs reducing nitrogen pollution, and improving and monitoring water quality; and the Long Island Sound Stewardship Act (authorized in 2006) that provides up to \$25 million per year for enhancement, restoration and acquisition of land and easements that protect important ecological and recreational sites around the Sound, and promote public access to this amazing natural wonder.

In addition to reauthorizing the Restoration Act for another five years, the proposed Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act provides for an important streamlining of the Long Island Sound program by combining the Stewardship Act under the same authorization. This will ensure that LIS program authorizations mirror recent appropriations, which have dedicated funds to a general Long Island Sound Program (both restoration and stewardship) without enumerating specific allotments for each individual authorizing Act. This legislation also contains a number of other provisions that would enhance the effectiveness of the EPA's Long Island Sound program including; eliminating the unnecessary requirement to create a Federal Advisory Committee, providing for better coordination among federal, state and local agencies throughout the Long Island Sound region, and requiring timely and accurate reporting on the use of funds.

The States, Counties and municipalities of New York and Connecticut have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to restore the Sound's water quality and protect its coastal resources, and have forged strong, inter-municipal partnerships with all levels of government on natural resource and watershed management activities. The federal government must continue to be an active player in the restoration of the Sound, and to ensure these important local partnerships continue. This legislation is

an important step toward ensuring this strong federal, state and local partnership continues, while providing meaningful reforms to improve management of this vital program and keep people working in the region

We look forward to working with you to realize successful passage of the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act in this Congress, and should you need any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact Sean Mahar of Audubon New York (518-869-9731 or smahar@audubon.org) or Sandy Breslin of Audubon Connecticut (203-264-5098 or sbreslin@audubon.org).

Sincerely,

National/State Organizations

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Local Organizations/Businesses

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