



For Immediate Release

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CONGRESS MOVES TO INVEST IN THE NATION'S ESTUARIES

Reauthorizes the National Estuary Program to recover and grow coastal economic economies and ensure resilient coastal communities

(LOS ANGELES, CA, February 2, 2021) - Congress reaffirmed its support and strong commitment to the [National Estuary Program](#), a time tested, non-regulatory program that enables communities to restore and protect the bays and estuaries they call home. The [Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program](#) (SMBNEP), a partnership between the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and The Bay Foundation, is one of 28 “estuaries of national significance” along every coast that will benefit directly from legislation approved by Congress. It was strongly supported by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris and 48 California Representatives including: Ted Lieu, Maxine Waters, Karen Bass, Julia Brownley, Janet Napolitano, Adam Schiff, Pete Aguilar, Nanette Diaz-Barragán, Tony Cardenas, Judy Chu, Jimmy Gomez, Alan Lowenthal, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Brad Sherman, Norma Torres, and Kevin McCarthy.

The Protect and Restore America’s Estuaries Act, with strong bipartisan support and unanimous approval from the Senate, was signed into law on January 13, 2021. The Act reaffirms support for the work of the National Estuary Program, and nearly doubles the annual funding limit to \$50 million. Under the new law, each NEP could receive as much as \$1 million each year. The SMBNEP works with our communities at the local level to protect the coastal resources essential for tourism, commerce, storm protection, clean water and marine-based food supply such as fisheries and aquaculture. Increasing threats from pollution, harmful algal blooms, accelerating land loss, and risks to biodiversity threaten the vitality of estuaries across the country, and are a growing concern.

“These actions demonstrate a clear recognition by Congress of the economic and environmental value of our nation’s estuaries and coasts,” said Lexie Bell, Chair of the national nonprofit [Association of National Estuary Programs](#), established in 1995 to bring the National Estuary Programs together for collaboration and shared learning.

Rep. Tom Malinowski, D-N.J., a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and the original sponsor of the bill introduced in July 2019 said, “Estuaries nurture a vast array of marine life, filter pollutants from rivers before they reach the sea, and are the natural infrastructure that protects human communities from floods and storms. As extreme weather events increasingly threaten these nurseries of the sea, I’m very proud this important legislation was signed into law, so these critical waterways will continue to be protected.”

Senators Whitehouse of Rhode Island, Cassidy of Louisiana, and Carper of Delaware were instrumental in securing passage of the bill, and are long time champions of estuaries and coastal protection.

“In addition to funding ecological restoration, research, and providing grants, the National Estuary Program ensures that the management plans governing nationally significant estuaries consider the effects of increasing and recurring extreme weather events and develop and implement appropriate adaptation strategies,” said SMBNEP Director and TBF Chief Executive Officer Tom Ford. “We are greatly appreciative of the strong support from our Senators and Representatives for the important work being

done in our estuaries through our program and in collaboration with so many partners across sectors,” said Ford.

Last year, the SMBNEP successfully accomplished the following with partners:

- **562 endangered white abalone** outplanted in Fall 2020 to restore the abalone population off Palos Verdes;
- TBF’s Abalone Lab is holding and caring for **1500 endangered white abalone** to be outplanted in 2021;
- Commercial urchin divers spent **283 hours** underwater restoring **4.2 acres** of kelp forest;
- Over **10,000 pounds (5 tons) of iceplant** removed at the Zuma Lagoon site of the Malibu Living Shorelines Project, to be replaced by over **700 native plants**;
- Over **1,400 native plants** installed at the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve;
- Over **3,000 boaters** engaged on preventing pollution;
- One community garden implemented in Inglewood, CA, with over **100 Environmental Charter Middle School-Inglewood students** virtually engaged on the garden’s purpose, planning, and construction;
- **28 Coastal Research Institute interns** from Loyola Marymount U., U. of Southern California, U. of California, Irvine, and U. of California, Los Angeles, contributed over **800 hours** to The Bay Foundation projects.

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