

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, Capital Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, Capital Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell:

Thank you for your leadership on legislation to improve American competitiveness, boost innovation, and create new jobs. We the undersigned represent millions of hunters, anglers, outdoor enthusiasts, land stewards, scientists, and natural resource professionals who together comprise the centerpiece of a powerful economic engine and have helped to place the United States as the world leader in conservation. We are witnessing declines in landscape health and resiliency as well as impacts on our nation's fish and wildlife resources that fundamentally affect our outdoor heritage and the annual \$200 billion hunting and fishing economy and \$788 billion outdoor recreation economy. Eighty-three percent of the world's carbon is circulated through the ocean, with half of it sequestered by important coastal habitats, even though they make up only 2 percent of the world's total ocean area. As you work to align and finalize competitiveness legislation, we ask that you retain language from the America COMPETES Act that advances our understanding of the climate benefits of coastal and ocean ecosystems and keeps them working to safeguard our coasts against future climate threats.

House Amendment 423: Blue Carbon for Our Planet Act

This bicameral, bipartisan legislation supports blue carbon ecosystems and their ability to sequester carbon dioxide while providing habitat for valuable recreational and commercial fisheries, improving water quality, building resilient shorelines threatened by sea level rise and storms, and generating an annual \$235 billion for the coastal recreation economy. As identified by the 2021 joint resolution to recognize National Estuary Week, "Estuary regions [coastal areas] cover only 13 percent of the land area in the continental United States but contain nearly 43 percent of the population, 40 percent of the jobs, and nearly 50 percent of the economic output of the United States." Although the significance of these areas is recognized, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have reported we are losing an average of 80,000 acres of coastal wetlands annually, weakening the security of coastal communities and ecosystems.

Inclusion of this bill would create an Interagency Working Group on blue carbon, led by NOAA, to develop a national map of blue carbon ecosystems, establish priorities for restoring coastal blue

carbon ecosystems, assess the barriers to blue carbon ecosystem restoration, and study the effects of stressors on sequestration.

House Amendment 150: COAST Research Act

This bipartisan legislation strengthens our nation's understanding of ocean and coastal acidification that threatens species and habitats in addition to our economy and food security. Inclusion of this bill would reauthorize the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act, acknowledge the importance and role of estuaries with a more inclusive definition of ocean acidification, and direct NOAA to establish and improve ocean acidification data.

Healthy, functioning coastal ecosystems mitigate climate change while also making our communities and wildlife more resilient to climate change impacts. The provisions outlined above will help protect, restore, and enable critical ecosystems necessary for maintaining hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation economies while providing relevant agencies with access to the best available data to ensure our coastal systems work to protect and sustain us.

We appreciate your consideration of these policies designed to strengthen the blue economy and improve American competitiveness.

Sincerely,

Angler Action Foundation
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust
Fly Fishers International
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation
Izaak Walton League of America
Land Trust Alliance
Minority Outdoor Alliance
National Deer Association
National Wildlife Federation
North American Falconers Association
Restore America's Estuaries
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Wildlife Management Institute