

AN OPEN LETTER FROM AMERICA'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY SUPPORTING COASTAL ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

June 15, 2011

As companies and industry trade associations with a keen business interest in healthy coastal, estuarine, and riverine ecosystems, we urge your strong support for federal habitat restoration programs that are essential components to restoring the health and vitality of these areas. In addition to the resulting ecological benefits, these programs yield immense economic benefits that we believe justify sustained federal investment.

The nation's coasts and rivers are critical to Americans' lives, livelihoods, and property. When healthy, and sustainably managed, these areas support and protect countless commercial and recreational industries, from shipping and energy development, to sport fishing and kayaking. Because of their abundance, beauty, and ability to support and protect human populations, a vast majority of Americans choose to live and work in and near these ecosystems. However, ever-increasing demands placed on these areas have resulted in substantial habitat loss requiring restoration efforts to reverse these trends.

For more than a decade, NOAA's restoration programs, USDA's suite of conservation programs, and the Army Corps' restoration initiatives – to name a few – have worked together to support successful on-the-ground restoration projects through non-regulatory approaches that emphasize community engagement and public-private partnerships. As private stakeholders in these projects, we contribute to their success through a variety of means – by providing financial support, goods and services, networking opportunities, and employees who donate their time to volunteer in local projects. Importantly, we value the financial and partnership opportunities available through these federal programs, which support private investment and sustained economic gains.

Restoration programs are also helping to create jobs in our industries, while benefiting local and regional coastal economies that generate more than half the nation's GDP. A recent study¹ shows that every \$50 million invested in restoration can create nearly 1,500 new jobs. In addition, the resulting cleaner water and more abundant habitats indirectly support further job creation in local economies by improving land values, supporting commercial fishing, improving tourism, and creating new business and recreational opportunities.

Unfortunately, America's coastal, estuarine, and riverine habitats continue to decline – approaching 80 to 95 percent in some areas – and tens of thousands of small dams that no longer serve a necessary function continue to block migratory fish access to 600,000 miles of rivers and streams. These facts became astoundingly clear through a recent funding competition² that demonstrated a \$3 billion backlog of more than 800 shovel-ready restoration projects across the country. This represents a clear opportunity for the federal government to cost-effectively support activities that will improve both the short- and long-term environmental and economic health of the United States, and we stand ready and willing to assist in that endeavor.

¹ Fayanju, "Profiles in Restoration."

² NOAA Community-based Restoration Program 30-day funding opportunity through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

We thank you for your leadership on this issue, and respectfully request your support for federal restoration efforts that are making a difference nationwide.

Contact Chris Lyons at Restore America's Estuaries (clyons@estuaries.org or 703-524-0248) with questions.

Sincerely,

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