

RISE TO RESILIENCE

OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURE

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol,
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol,
Washington, D.C. 20510

April 27, 2023

RE: Prioritizing Investments in Resilience in FY 2024

On behalf of the [Rise to Resilience Coalition](#), we are writing to share our support for critical investments in resilience to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change in the FY 2024 appropriations bills you will develop. Rise to Resilience is a coalition spearheaded by the Waterfront Alliance and composed of over 110 partner organizations. We represent residents, volunteer organizations, scientists, environmental advocates, design professionals, and leaders in business, labor, community and justice collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make climate resilience an urgent priority.

In the past five years, weather and climate disasters have led to the loss of thousands of lives and caused nearly \$150 billion annually in damages. In recent history, New York and New Jersey have experienced multiple disaster declarations, including the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Sandy and Ida. We need both policies that support building smarter and investments in addressing our existing risks, especially to protect those least able to adapt. We urge you to expand the following appropriations in Fiscal Year 2024 to mitigate the risks we face in the region and nationally through wise up-front investments that will pay dividends in losses avoided and other benefits such as jobs, public and environmental health.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Federal Emergency Management Administration

- **Building Resilience Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC):** We encourage you to fund the BRIC program to its fullest authorized extent (**6% annual allocation**), which would save taxpayers money in the long term by substantially lowering the damages and costs associated with future disasters and allow for more proactive planning and preparedness. While \$200 million in annual funding for the next five years was appropriated

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through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, a record-breaking \$4.6 billion in funding requests were made in FY 2022, more than twice the available funding amount of \$2.2 billion, demonstrating significant additional need. Given this, **we support maximizing the full account for the BRIC program.**

- **Flood Hazard Mapping Program:** Historically underfunded, FEMA's flood hazard maps are in many cases outdated and do not incorporate climate science and future risks. About 15% of participating communities have maps over 15 years old, many exceeding 30 years, and over 6,500 counties and communities do not have any flood maps. And yet, these maps are the basis of efforts to understand and minimize flood risk. We request appropriators to set the FY24 funding level for flood risk mapping at a **minimum of \$400 million in addition to any amounts allocated to mapping from revenues derived directly from the flood insurance policy fee** to modernize these maps to help communities and individuals plan ahead and mitigate their risks more effectively (i.e. A 2020 analysis by the Association of State Floodplain Managers estimates that the cost to complete updated flood mapping for the nation falls between \$3.2 and \$11.8 billion, with an annual maintenance cost ranging from \$107 and \$480 million).
- **Flood Mitigation Assistance Program:** This program provides important support to projects that reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings insured by the National Flood Insurance Program. We request maintaining a minimum funding level of **\$175 million** for this program. While increased allocations were made for this program following the disasters of 2021 including Ida, it is important that base funding is maintained given the overwhelming need.
- **Emergency Management Performance Grants:** Supports capacity-building of emergency management departments to build and sustain core capabilities across prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery mission areas. We support the President's budget request of **\$355 million** in grants to assist departments in managing recovery and planning effort.
- **Resilience Revolving Loan (STORM Act) Funds:** This new program provides capitalization grants to states to establish dedicated revolving loan funds for hazard mitigation projects. Like most states, neither New Jersey nor New York have dedicated funding sources for resilience. The establishment of such funds provides an avenue for states to expand and leverage other sources of funding and direct funding where it is needed most. We strongly support this new program and encourage Congress and the President to consider the current allocation of **\$100 million annually** (via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) to be the floor for negotiation. The current allocation is equivalent to approximately \$2 million per state annually, a very small amount for capital project development.

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- **National Flood Insurance Program Affordability:** We support a proposed affordability program for National Flood Insurance policy holders at **\$350 million**. This assistance is critical to address the financial burden of insurance and bolster the resilience of lower-income households by increasing the accessibility of insurance.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING, AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Housing and Urban Development

- **Community Development Block Grants:** These funds, especially the mitigation and disaster recovery funds, provide important and flexible funding for large-scale, multi-faceted resilience projects that protect communities. Congress should continue to support these funds in appropriations at the maximum amount following a disaster. We also support the appropriation of at least **\$3.4 billion** for this program in FY 2024.

Transportation

- **The Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT):** This program provides both formula and competitive funding to projects to build resilience into some of America's most vulnerable transportation infrastructure to the effects of climate change. As flooding, heat waves, inclement weather, and other impacts of climate change become more severe, the PROTECT program is more essential than ever. Congress should fund the PROTECT competitive grants program at the IIJA-authorized **\$300 million**.
- **The Healthy Streets Program:** This program, created by the IIJA, provides funding to address the Urban Heat Island effect, a public health emergency that plagues cities across the country, particularly those that have been historically underserved. As the climate crisis worsens, the need for these investments will only grow as heat waves affect more and more communities. Congress should fund the Healthy Streets Program at the IIJA-authorized **\$100 million**.

ENERGY AND WATER

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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- **Fund the Next Set of Projects Identified in the Hudson-Raritan Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Project (HRE):** Authorized through the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, the HRE includes priority projects across the region that would restore critical ecosystems and build resilience to climate change, resulting in the restoration of more than 500 acres of habitat across the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region. To continue this progress, we support \$2.75 million to continue planning, engineering and design towards creation of new shoreline habitat at Fresh Creek in Brooklyn. Initial planning funds are also requested to advance the next two authorized sites: Restoration of Garth Woods in Westchester County (\$500,000) and re-establishment of the Duck Point Marsh Island in Jamaica Bay (\$2,275,000) for a total of **\$5,525,000** in community project funding across all projects.
- **Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC):** We request maximizing funding for ERDC and an increase of **\$40 million** to expand the computational modeling capacity of ERDC, including support to District staff for new and on-going feasibility studies to integrate additional flood risks of concern to the local sponsors, training District staff, and improving and developing new computational model capabilities. Research and development funding has waned over time despite an increasing need to tackle increasing challenges with better data - including the ability to model individual and compound flood hazards as well as the contribution of natural infrastructure to flood risk reduction. These advancements are critical to better managing our flood risk in an efficient and economically sound manner, and our level of funding for research and development in this area is significantly smaller than other nations, the Army as a whole, and the private sector. For example, the water management agency of the Netherlands, Deltares, devotes 9% of its budget to research and development, whereas only .3% of the US Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works budget is devoted to research and development. Shorter time scales of analysis and a single-hazard approach can potentially lead to biases toward gray measures. In addition, determining the appropriate size and location of a wetland natural infrastructure project required to achieve the desired benefits and co-benefits are difficult to determine without dedicated computational modeling.
- **Regulatory Program:** Enhanced funding of at least **\$208 million** for the regulatory program would ensure that permitting offices are properly resourced to complete project reviews swiftly and in the most effective way to expedite project delivery and produce positive environmental outcomes. Funding for regulatory programs is also crucial to reducing cost escalation for public works projects. When projects sit with regulators for review for years, budgets escalate putting a larger burden on taxpayers. At a minimum NY needs full regulatory staffing for wetland resources, particularly scaled to the dense number of projects and complexity in urban (EJ) areas.

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COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND SCIENCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- **National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund:** We support ongoing funding for this program through regular appropriations (funded through the National Ocean and Coastal Security Fund), as demand far exceeds resources available year after year. For that reason, we request that Congress fund the National Ocean and Coastal Security Fund at least at FY 23 levels, or **\$34 million**, as requested by NOAA in FY24.
- **National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERR):** In New York and New Jersey, including the **Jacques Cousteau NERR and Hudson River NERR**, enable the protection and restoration of natural resources that our people and ecosystems depend on and support coastal resilience planning in the state. We request **\$47 million in operations**, research and facilities funds and **\$10 million** in procurement, acquisition and construction funds to support the NERR program. The requested increase in the NERRS annual budget will strengthen the impact of Congress' recent investments.
- **Coastal Zone Management Act Program:** Which assists states in planning for rising seas and changing weather patterns, increasing community resilience. CZMA and Services should be funded at **\$52 million**. The Coastal Management Grants should be funded at **\$79 million**.

INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT

Department of the Interior

- **National Park Service:** The National Park Service has lost thousands of staff over the decade due to lack of funding, undermining resource protection and visitor services. While funding increases in FY23 restored 500 staff, more work is needed to ensure parks regain the staff they've lost over the years. Further, the NPS cultural resource stewardship budget has fallen by 28% over the last 20 years. An operations funding increase would support hiring and retention of a workforce that would interpret park stories, preserve historic buildings and artifacts and identify cultural sites at risk from climate change. We therefore request **\$3.8 billion** in funding for the National Park Service and a specific increase in NPS operations funding by at least \$266 million in FY24.

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

- **National Estuary Program:** We encourage congress to fully fund the National Estuary Program at the authorized level of **\$50 million**, including at least \$1 million to each entity within the national estuary program, and to fund the innovative competitive awards program at \$4 million consistent with Public Law 116-337.
- **Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant Program:** We request **\$300 million** for this grant program, including a set-aside for green and natural infrastructure grants to be administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 40% of which should be directed toward low-income communities and communities of color.

Throughout all these investments, it is important to especially prioritize holistic, natural, and nature-based solutions as a means to address many environmental challenges at once and support the clean air, water, flood, and heat mitigation people and ecosystems depend on for our health, safety, and wellbeing. Several of the funding allocations requested above are opportunities for Congress to support advancing workforce development and new job creation for nature-based jobs, which should be prioritized in the federal budget. We need an all- government approach to tackling the impacts of climate change and thank you for considering these priorities as part of the solution.

Sincerely,

American Littoral Society

Environmental Defense Fund

Future City Inc.

Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy

Natural Areas Conservancy

National Parks Conservation Association *

New Jersey Future

New York Building Congress

New Yorkers for Parks

New York League of Conservation Voters

NYC H2O

Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation

Rebuild by Design

Regional Ready Rockaway

Regional Plan Association

Riverkeeper

Smart Growth America *

Surfrider Foundation

Waterfront Alliance

WE ACT for Environmental Justice

** National Signatories Supporting Federal Priorities*

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CC:

The Honorable Brian Shatz

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The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith

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The Honorable Diane Feinstein

Chair, Senate Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
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The Honorable John Kennedy

Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
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The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen

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The Honorable Jerry Moran

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The Honorable Jeff Merkley

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The Honorable Lisa Murkowski

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The Honorable Chris Murphy
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The Honorable Katie Britt
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Rise to Resilience is a campaign and coalition which includes more than 100 organizations representing leaders in business, labor, environmental justice, volunteer organizations, scientists, environmental advocates, and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make building climate resilience an urgent priority. Waterfront Alliance, an advocate for coastal resilience, waterfront access, and working waterfronts in the New York-New Jersey region, spearheads the Rise to Resilience coalition.

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