February 20, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves, Chair
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Rick Larson, Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

For Electronic Delivery

National and Regional Organizations Support the Bipartisan New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act (H.R. 2982 / S. 1335)

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larson,

As representatives of organizations nationwide as well as in New York and New Jersey, we support H.R. 2982 / S. 1335, the New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act (NYNJWPA). This year provides a historic opportunity to authorize the NYNJWPA and ensure that communities across the New York-New Jersey region have the opportunity to collaborate with the federal government to advance local watershed management that many other regions have benefited from for decades.

Along with supplying clean water to some 15 million Americans living in one of the country’s most densely populated and economically diverse regions, the harbor and its watersheds — including the Hudson, Mohawk, Raritan, Passaic, Hackensack, and Bronx rivers — host some of the busiest U.S. ports, provide opportunities for tourism and outdoor recreation that attract people from around the world and improve public health, sustain significant fisheries and critical wildlife habitat, and protect businesses and vital infrastructure from flooding and other storm-related damages. Additionally, the NYNJWPA will provide critical support for rural communities across the region by providing funding to support local public access and wildlife management plans. The conservation of this watershed is especially critical as the home to millions of Americans and significant economic activity; in addition to ensuring a healthy and resilient ecosystem, and promoting jobs for the family-owned businesses equipped to do habitat restoration work, it is critical to secure and improve public access for outdoor recreationists including sportsmen and women.

The NYNJWPA offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a coordinated, watershed-wide program built upon decades of efforts to restore some of the nation’s most impaired and degraded waters. Federal partnerships in the watersheds of Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River, Long Island Sound, Lake Champlain, the Great Lakes, and others have successfully demonstrated how such a program can deliver direct benefits to the environment, local communities, and state economies. Notably, the grant program authorized by this legislation will match local funds and leverage additional resources to assist communities lacking in environmental justice, as well as the small, rural communities that are critical to the economic and environmental well-being of the watershed.
These waterways play a critical role in enhancing Americans’ quality of life, health, and prosperity, and in restoring communities disproportionately challenged by climate change. Local partnerships are strong and regional priorities have been established through dozens of science-based, consensus-driven plans to manage these natural resources and protect fish and wildlife habitats, improve water quality, increase public access to the water, mitigate flood risks, and develop public outreach and educational activities. In addition to helping to implement these locally approved plans, federal leadership, coordination, and resources will amplify their impacts by promoting collaboration that will ensure on-the-ground public benefits span the entire region.

The New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act is essential to the recovery of the region’s water, economic well-being, wildlife, and communities. We strongly support the passage of this legislation in the Water Resources Development Act of 2024 and urge Representatives to ensure the 118th Congress does not close without the passage of NYNJWPA.

Riverkeeper
Scenic Hudson
Bergen county Audubon society
Coalition to Ban Unsafe Oil Trains
Coney Island Beautification Project, Inc.
Engineers Labor-Employer Cooperative Local 825: The Operating Engineers & Contractors Trust
Environment New Jersey
Environmental Defense Fund Action
Friends of Liberty State Park
Future City INC
Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Great Swamp Watershed Association
Hackensack Riverkeeper
Hudson River Fishermen’s Association
Hudson River Foundation
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
Hunters Point Parks Conservancy
Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership
National Parks Conservation Association
New Jersey Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
New York Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
New York League of Conservation Voters
NewarkDIG (Doing Infrastructure Green)
Newtown Creek Alliance
Northern New Jersey Community Foundation
NY Water Action
NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
NYC H2O
NYNJ Baykeeper
Passaic River Coalition
Raritan Headwaters
Teaneck Creek Conservancy
The Municipal Art Society of New York
The Nature Conservancy New York
The Nature Conservancy New Jersey
Trout Unlimited
Waterfront Alliance