



For Immediate Release

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CONGRESS MOVES TO INVEST IN THE NATION'S ESTUARIES

Reauthorizes the National Estuary Program to ensure resilient coastal communities

(Portland, Maine, 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. Casco Bay Estuary Partnership is one of 28 "estuaries of national significance" along every coast that will benefit directly from legislation approved by Congress. Senators Susan Collins and Angus King and Representatives Chellie Pingree and Jared Golden strongly supported this legislation.

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 (NEP), and nearly doubles the annual funding limit to \$50 million. Under the new law, each NEP, including Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP), could receive as much as \$1 million each year.

CBEP works with communities at the local level to protect the coastal resources essential for tourism, local economies, 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.

Rep. Tom Malinowski, D-N.J., a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and the original sponsor of the bill 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."

"We are greatly appreciative of the continuing support from our Senators and Representatives for the important work being done in Casco Bay estuary and in collaboration with so many partners across sectors," says Curtis Bohlen, CBEP Director. "CBEP is proud to support the hard work of our local communities as they adapt to a changing climate and implement effective adaptation strategies."

Last year, CBEP successfully collaborated with local, state, federal, nonprofit and academic partners to test "living shoreline" approaches to shoring up our eroding coastline, participated in Maine Climate Council planning, and revised the Casco Bay Monitoring Plan, that identifies where increased monitoring is needed in Casco Bay to better understand how the Bay is changing.