

April 26, 2018

Re: Restore FY 2019 Funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's BEACH Act Grants Program

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski, Chairman Calvert and Ranking Members Udall and McCollum;

We, the undersigned organizations, have grave concerns over the proposed cuts for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revealed in the President's Budget for Federal Year 2019. The proposed, massive 23% reduction in total agency funding will not allow the EPA to continue to do the job Congress has tasked it with - protecting public health and the environment.

Of particular concern are the drastic reductions proposed to state-assistance grants, including the complete elimination of the BEACH Grants Program authorized under the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act.

Since Congress passed the BEACH Act with overwhelming bi-partisan support in 2000, the BEACH Grants Program has been providing federal assistance to coastal states and territories to monitor water quality at beaches and to notify the public when bacteria levels exceed applicable health standards. Although the previous Administration likewise proposed to withdraw federal funding for this program, supporters in Congress who know how important it is to protect the health and safety of beachgoers across this nation have kept nearly level funding for the BEACH Act in each of the last six approved, federal spending bills (\$9.549 million in FY 2018).

The current proposal to eliminate the BEACH Grants Program not only will leave beachgoers and recreational water users at risk of being exposed to bacteria, viruses and other pathogens that make people sick, but it also puts the booming, multi-billion dollar coastal tourism economies that depend on public confidence in clean water at the beach at risk. Coastal tourism and recreation were valued at over \$100 billion by the National Ocean and Economics Program, accounting for nearly 2.15 million jobs nationwide in 2013 – up 3.83% from 2010 and growing faster than the national job employment growth rate of 1.6% between 2010 and 2014.

Continued federal investment of this program, which costs just under \$10 million, is both a smart economic and public health decision. Given that most states typically receive only approximately \$250,000 - \$350,000 per year to protect the nation's beaches, the return on investment from the BEACH Grants Program is very high.

Without continued federal support, the states do not have the resources to provide adequate public health protection at the beach. More than half of state recipients rely solely on the BEACH Grants Program to pay for their water quality monitoring program. Even those states that can afford to augment these federal funds with local money will likely be forced to reduce their sampling programs, leaving the beach-going public unprotected and at risk.

The Administration's proposal to eliminate funding for the BEACH Grants Program also creates the real risk that states will stop following federal swimmer safety standards. Under the BEACH Act, states that accept federal funds must implement programs that meet certain minimum requirements. Dropping this funding opens the door to the possibility that states will either

abandon these beachgoer protections altogether or will set standards so low that public health will be gravely endangered. The proposed funding cuts to the EPA could spark a race to the bottom across the states.

Americans rely on water quality monitoring and reporting to ensure that the water we swim, surf and play in is safe – especially for our children. With over 95,000 miles of U. S. coastlines, clean and safe beaches are vital to coastal tourism businesses that are themselves major contributors to the nation’s economy and domestic jobs market.

The Administration’s proposal to eliminate the BEACH Grants Program administered by the EPA is unacceptable and will immediately put the public’s health and the security of our coastal economies at risk. Beachgoers, boaters, and recreational water users of the United States need functional federal and state recreational water quality programs. Please reject the Administration’s FY 2019 budget proposal and support level funding (\$9.549 million) for the BEACH Grants Program.

Sincerely,

Surfrider Foundation
Environment America
Clean Ocean Action
Acadia Institute of Oceanography
Accabonac Protection Committee
Alabama Water Watch
American Littoral Society
Annis Water Resources Institute - Grand Valley State University
Blue Frontier Campaign
Blue Water Baltimore
Cahaba Riverkeeper
California Coastkeeper Alliance
Calusa Waterkeeper
Center for Ecological Living and Learning
Chicago Park District
Citizens for Oceanfront Preservation
Clean Water Action
Climate Action RI
Coastal Almanac
Coastal Carolina Riverwatch
Concerned Citizens of Montauk
Crystal Coast Waterkeeper
Defend H2O
Ditch Plains Association
Environment New Jersey
Erie County Department of Health

Farmington River Watershed Association
Fisheries Resource Volunteer Corps
Food & Water Watch
Friends of Casco Bay
Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation
Friends of Grays Harbor
Friends of Miller Peninsula State Park
Friends of the Weskeag
Global Ocean Health
Grain Surfboards
Grand Traverse County Health Department
Greenpeace USA
Group for the East End
Gulf Restoration Network
Hackensack Riverkeeper
Heal the Bay
Humboldt Baykeeper
Izaak Walton League of America Wildlife Achievement Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America, Maryland Division
Jersey Shore Partnership
Long Island Businesses for Responsible Energy
Lynnhaven River NOW
Maine Coastal Habitat Foundation
Maine Rivers
Marin Academy
McDermott Shapes LLC
Mignogna Consulting
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Mobile Baykeeper
Monterey County Public Health Laboratory
MountainTrue
Napili Bay and Beach Foundation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Natural Resources Protective Association
Nature Coast Conservation, Inc.
Niagara County Department of Health
North Sound Baykeeper at RE Sources
Northwest Alliance
NY/NJ Baykeeper
Ocean Conservancy

Ocean Conservation Research
Operation SPLASH
Orange County League of Conservation Voters
Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition
Outdoor Alliance
Palm Beach County Reef Rescue
Pearl Riverkeeper
Peconic Baykeeper
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Quantitative Ecological Services
Raritan Riverkeeper
Regional Science Consortium
Riverkeeper
Rosario Beach Marine Laboratory
Rumson Garden Club
San Diego Coastkeeper
Save Our Shores
Save The River/Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper
Save The Waves Coalition
Some Brewing Company LLC
St. John Community Foundation
Suncoast Waterkeeper
Surfers Environmental Alliance
The River Otter Ecology Project
The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
The Whale Guitar Project
United Sludge Free Alliance
University of Cincinnati, Drinking Water, Water Supply, Quality,
Treatment & Env. Nanotechnology Labs
Virginia State University, Agricultural Research
Waterkeeper Alliance
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
WATERSPIRIT
White Oak-New Riverkeeper Alliance
WILDCOAST

**cc: Members of the Senate and House of Representatives Subcommittees on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies.**

