April 24, 2017

**Re: Restore FY 2018 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 planned cuts for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revealed in the President’s Budget Blueprint for Federal Year 2018. The proposed 31% reduction in total agency budget and staffing reductions of 20% 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 four, approved, federal spending bills ($9.59 million in FY 2016).

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 good economic decision and a smart public health decision. Given that most states typically receive only between $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 2018 budget proposal and support level funding ($9.59 million) for the BEACH Grants Program.

Sincerely,

Mara Dias Paul Gallay

Water Quality Manager President

**Surfrider Foundation Hudson Riverkeeper**

Cindy Zipf Ryan Smart

Executive Director President

**Clean Ocean Action**  **1000 Friends of Florida**

Michael S. Freeman Kyle Gronostajski

Member Executive Director

**Alabama Water Watch**  **Alliance for a Living Ocean**

Joel Brammeier Alexandar Peters

President President

**Alliance for the Great Lakes** **Amagansett Springs Aquifer Protection**

Dean A. Wilson Joe Liebzeit

Executive Director Avian Conservation Manager

**Atchafalaya Basinkeeper** **Audubon Society of Portland**

Angela Haren Angela Kowalzek-Adrians

Director of Advocacy Natural Resource Planner

**Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission**

Nelson Brooke Sara Aminzadeh

Riverkeeper Executive Director

**Black Warrior Riverkeeper** **California Coastkeeper Alliance**

John Cassani Steve Hall

Calusa Waterkeeper Health Officer

**Calusa Waterkeeper** **Central Michigan Dist. Health Dept.**

Renata von Tscharner Andrew Wunderley

President Executive Director

**Charles River Conservancy** **Charleston Waterkeeper**

Michael Mullen Andrew Grinberg

Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper Special Project Manager

**Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper, Inc.** **Clean Water Action**

Emily Cedzo Linda Tseng

Air, Water &Public Health Manager Assistant Professor

**Coastal Conservation League** **Colgate University**

Kati Rossi-Snook Tina Phillips

Environmental Advocate Research and Evaluation Manager

**Concerned Citizens of Montauk** **Cornell Ornithology Lab, Cornell U**

Larry Baldwin Kevin McAllister

Waterkeeper President

**Crystal Coast Waterkeeper** **Defend H2O**

Rhonda Kolberg, RN, MS John Rumpler

Director Clean Water Program Director

**Door County Public Health Dept.** **Environment America**

Jennifer Rubiello Doug O’Malley

State Director Director

**Environment Florida** **Environment New Jersey**

Karen Tobin Linda Young

Director, Environmental Health Services Executive Director

**Erie County Department of Health** **Florida Clean Water Network**

Mark Perry Manley Fuller

Executive Director President

**Florida Oceanographic Society** **Florida Wildlife Federation**

Liz Kirkwood Ivy L. Frignoca

Executive Director Casco Baykeeper

**FLOW (For Love of Water)** **Friends of Casco Bay**

Sara Davison Tim Glover

Executive Director President

**Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation** **Friends of St. Sebastian River**

Vivian Newman Alexander Karinsky

Convener **Gotham Surf Club**

**Friends of the Weskeag**

Paul L. Sieswerda Matt Rota

President Senior Policy Director

**Gotham Whale**  **Gulf Restoration Network**

Theaux M. Le Gardeur Sarah Crosby

Riverkeeper Director

**Gunpowder RIVERKEEPER** **Harbor Watch**

Carl Evensen Ryan Searcy

Interim Director Beach Water Quality Modeler

**Harold L. Lyon Arboretum/Univ. Hawaii** **Heal the Bay**

Dan Begnoche Dr. Kim Falinski

Environmental Health County Supervisor Scientist

**NW Michigan Health Dept., Emmet County** **Hui o Ka Wai Ola**

Jennifer Kalt Rodger Moran

Director 2nd Vice President

**Humboldt Baykeeper** **Izaak Walton League of America**

Patrick L. Calvert Pat Lynch

Upper James Riverkeeper Water Monitor

**James River Association** **Lake Watch of Lake Martin**

Helene Forst Alfredo Quarto

Chair Co-director

**LIBFRE**  **Mangrove Action Project**

Stori Oates Paulette Hammond

Science Teacher President

**Marin Academy** **Maryland Conservation Council**

Jane Disney Nancy Black

Director, Community Env. Health Editor

**MDI Biological Laboratory**  **Mercury Press International**

Cheryl Nenn Pat B. Lindquist

Riverkeeper President

**Milwaukee Riverkeeper** **Napili Bay & Beach Foundation**

Jon Devine Amanda McQuaid

Senior Attorney Beach Program Coordinator

**Natural Resources Defense Council**  **NH Dept. of Env. Services**

Ronald Gwozdek, P. E. Debbie Mans

Principal Engineer Executive Director

**Niagara County Department of Health**  **NY/NJ Baykeeper**

Wendy Marshall Erica Donnelly-Greenan

Director of Education Marine Ecologist III

**Ocean Quest**  **Oikonos Environmental Council**

Robert Weltner Garry Brown

President President

**Operation SPLASH** **Orange County Coastkeeper**

Cameron La Follette Lori Grant

Executive Director Water Program Director

**Oregon Coast Alliance**  **Oregon Environmental Council**

Phillip Johnson Sean O’Neill

Executive Director Executive Director

**Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition**  **Peconic Baykeeper**

Ralph Stanley Philip Musegaas

Supervisor, Environmental Health VP of Programs and Litigation

**Peel Health Department, Region of Peel** **Potomac Riverkeeper Network**

Jerry Covert, Ph. D. Jonathan DeMarco

Chairman Executive Director

**Presque Isle Advisory Committee** **Presque Isle Partnership**

Chris Wilke Bill Schultz

Executive Director Riverkeeper

**Puget Soundkeeper Alliance** **Raritan Riverkeeper**

Jessica Jens Stacey Detwiler

Executive Director Conservation Director

**Riveredge Nature Center** **Rogue Riverkeeper**

Robert Legge Diane Wilson

Science & Policy Coordinator Executive Director

**Russian Riverkeeper**  **San Antonio Bay Waterkeeper**

Kira Redmond Katherine O’Dea

Executive Director Executive Director

**Santa Barbara Channelkeeper** **Save Our Shores**

Mary Beth Schappert Jerry E. Hammons

Science Teacher Board Member

**Save the Beaches/Babylon School District** **Save the Illinois River**

Nick Mucha Gary Appelson

Director of Programs Policy Coordinator

**Save the Waves Coalition** **Sea Turtle Conservancy**

Leslie Tamminen Patrice Couch

Ocean Program Director Director, Water Quality Program

**Seventh Generation Advisors**  **St. Andrew Bay Watch**

Justin Bloom David Whiteside

Executive Director Executive Director

**Suncoast Waterkeeper** **Tennessee Riverkeeper**

Lia Colabello Christine Crissman

Community & Partnerships Director Executive Director

**The 5 Gyres Institute** **The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay**

Jere White Ruby Buchholtz

President Advocacy Manager

**Tiadaghton Trout Unlimited**  **Tualatin Riverkeepers**

Rachel Noble Darree Sicher

Professor President

UNC Chapel Hill **United Sludge Free Alliance**

Lee Willbanks Marc Verhougstraete

Executive Director Assistant Professor

**Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper**  **University of Arizona**

Dionysios Dionysiou Gary Kuleck

Professor, **University of Cincinnati** Dean

**Drinking Water, Water Supply, Quality, College of Engineering & Science**

**Treatment & Env. Nanotechnology Labs** **University of Detroit Mercy**

Asmare Atalay Kelly Hunter Foster

Research Professor Senior Attorney

**Virginia State University** **Waterkeeper Alliance**

Katlyn Clark Michael Solomon

Legal Fellow Drain Commissioner

**Waterkeepers Chesapeake**  **Wexford County**

Jessie Green

Executive Director

**White River Waterkeeper**

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