

November 18, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi,

As you consider final legislation for the 117th Congress, we write to express our sincere support for including critical ocean legislation in an end-of-year package. There are several key bipartisan bills we encourage you to pass into law by the end of the 117th Congress. These bills, if enacted, will help strengthen the U.S.'s ability to protect the ocean through responding in coordinated ways to address pressing coastal issues, protect vulnerable species and ecosystems, collect critical data that helps us better understand our ocean environment and respond to extreme weather, and ensure greater transparency through publicly accessible data.

We encourage you to include the following bills in an end-of-year package:

- **Regional Ocean Partnership Act** would formalize regional ocean partnerships (ROPs) as collaborative partners with federal agencies and secure more predictable funding to advance collaborative regional ocean efforts. ROPs are governor-created, regional organizations that collaborate with states, Tribes, federal agencies, and other ocean users to address ocean and coastal issues of common concern.
- **Marine Mammal Research and Response Act** would strengthen the U.S. government's efforts to protect marine mammals like manatees, dolphins, orcas, sea lions, and sea otters. This legislation would reauthorize the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Grant Program, which provides funding for organizations who rescue and rehabilitate injured or sick marine mammals.
- **Restoring Resilient Reefs Act** would reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, strengthen NOAA's Coral Reef Program, and give resources to non-federal partners to support coral reef conservation, management, and stewardship.
- **Bolstering Long-Term Understanding and Exploration of the Great Lakes, Oceans, Bays, and Estuaries (BLUE GLOBE) Act** would expand research, increase data collection and monitoring, deploy new technologies, advance the blue economy, and accelerate the dissemination of data to create a greater understanding of the nation's ocean and coastal ecosystems.
- **National Ocean Exploration Act** would authorize the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization Council, elevate and update ocean science priorities, and direct the Council to coordinate and facilitate activities across federal and non-federal entities to advance those priorities.
- **Learning Excellence and Good Examples from New Developers (LEGEND) Act** would improve weather modeling and forecasting by requiring NOAA to increase public accessibility of its models.
- **Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act** would promote shark conservation by making it illegal to possess, buy, sell, or transport shark fins or any product containing shark fins and imposes penalties and fines for each violation.

- **The Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act** would end the destructive use of large mesh drift gillnets in U.S. waters and save countless whales, dolphins, sea turtles, sharks, and sportfish. These mile-long, nearly invisible nets drift overnight to catch swordfish off California, but entangle, injure, and kill more than 70 other species of commercially viable fish.

We encourage you to include all eight bills in an end-of-year package and vote for their passage. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Animal Welfare Institute
Azul
Californians for Western Wilderness
Center for the Blue Economy
Chispa Texas
Creation Justice Ministries
Defenders of Wildlife
GreenLatinos
Healthy Gulf
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Inland Ocean Coalition
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
League of Conservation Voters
Marine Conservation Institute
National Aquarium
National Audubon Society
National Ocean Protection Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
NY4WHALES
Ocean Conservancy
Ocean Defense Initiative
Oceana
Pacific Whale Foundation
The Humane Society of the United States
Waterway Advocates
WILD Foundation
WILD COAST

CC:

Chair Maria Cantwell, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee;
Ranking Member Roger Wicker, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee;
Chair Raúl Grijalva, House Natural Resources Committee;