



2021 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP) is a partnership of federal and state agency officials, citizens, local government elected leaders, resource managers, and commercial and recreational resource users across multiple estuary watersheds within 10 counties and 25 cities in Central and Southwest Florida. CHNEP is part of the National Estuary Program (NEP) authorized by Congress, which fosters natural resource management that is consensus-based, non-regulatory, and based on sound science. CHNEP's federal legislative priorities for 2020 include:

- **REAUTHORIZATION OF THE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM (S 3591, HR 4044, S 3171)**
 - Reauthorization of the National Estuary Program is required to maintain important federal natural resource protection initiatives (last authorized in 2016).
 - The Senate Environment Committee has approved S 3591, a water resources bill which contains language to reauthorize the NEP and nearly double its funding authority to \$50 million. The Senate and House are actively negotiating a final Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) which could pass in the next few weeks.
 - The House of Representatives has strongly approved HR 4044 with a bi-partisan vote of 355 to 62. This legislation authorizes funding for the NEP at \$50 million per year, up from \$26.5 million.
 - Bipartisan companion legislation has been introduced in the Senate, S 3171.
 - Passage of a final WRDA bill containing NEP reauthorization, or HR 4044 and S3171 will ensure critical water and habitat protection projects continue.
- **CONTINUED NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM FUNDING UNDER CURRENT AUTHORIZATION**
 - In the current fiscal year (FY 2020) Congress funded the NEP at \$662,500 for each of the 28 NEPs. In addition Congress funded the Competitive Grant Program at \$1.35 million, bringing the total to \$5.35 million in this account.
 - The request for FY 2021, which is being considered by Congress now, is for the authorized amount of \$750,000 per NEP, and an additional \$4 million for the competitive fund. The competitive fund allows entities within the National Estuary Program to apply to meet urgent community resiliency and resource protection needs, including harmful algae blooms.
 - Together these funding levels will put more funding in the field and enable the NEP to continue to invest in vital projects to restore and protect estuaries.
- **ESTUARY CAUCUS MEMBERSHIP EXPANSION**
 - The bipartisan Congressional Estuary Caucus (CEC) was established in early 2017 to help educate leaders at all levels of government on the importance of estuaries, and ensure we sustain the robust support for proven programs that work to confront the mutual troubles of U.S. estuaries. It currently has 34 members from all regions of the United States.
 - The Caucus seeks additional members to support water quality protection and vibrant coastal economies (<https://estuaries.org/get-involved/estuary-caucus>). Members may join the caucus by contacting Maxine.Sugarman@mail.house.gov with Rep. Bonamici's (OR) office.