

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2786

To allow the Secretary of Commerce to establish a Coastal and Estuarine Resilience and Restoration Program, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 9, 2025

Mr. LEVIN (for himself, Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. MAST, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, and Mr. CARTER of Georgia) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To allow the Secretary of Commerce to establish a Coastal and Estuarine Resilience and Restoration Program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Resilient Coasts and
5 Estuaries Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. COASTAL AND ESTUARINE RESILIENCE AND RES-**
7 **TORATION PROGRAM.**

8 Section 307A of the Coastal Zone Management Act
9 of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1456–1) is amended—

1 (1) by striking the heading and inserting
2 “COASTAL AND ESTUARINE RESILIENCE AND RES-
3 TORATION PROGRAM”;

4 (2) by amending subsection (a) to read as fol-
5 lows:

6 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may conduct a
7 Coastal and Estuarine Resilience and Restoration Pro-
8 gram in cooperation with State, regional, and other units
9 of government, the National Estuarine Research Reserves,
10 and non-governmental organizations for the purposes of—

11 “(1) protecting important coastal and estuarine
12 areas that—

13 “(A) have significant conservation, rec-
14 reational, coastal access, ecological, historical,
15 community protection, or aesthetic value;

16 “(B) are threatened by conversion from
17 their natural, undeveloped, or recreational state
18 to other uses; or

19 “(C) could be managed or restored to ef-
20 fectively conserve, enhance, or restore ecological
21 function or mitigate climate change; and

22 “(2) restoring developed or degraded property
23 in vulnerable coastal and estuarine areas to a nat-
24 ural state to restore ecological function, allow for

1 shoreline migration, and protect coastal commu-
2 nities.”;

3 (3) in subsection (b), by striking “or National
4 Estuarine Research Reserve units” and inserting “,
5 National Estuarine Research Reserves, or non-gov-
6 ernmental organizations that meet the requirements
7 of subsection (k)”;

8 (4) in subsection (c)—

9 (A) by striking “or National Estuarine Re-
10 search Reserves” and inserting “, National Es-
11 tuarine Research Reserves, or non-governmental
12 organizations that meet the requirements of
13 subsection (k)”;

14 (B) in paragraph (2)—

15 (i) by striking “after consultation”
16 and inserting “in coordination”; and

17 (ii) by striking “shall identify” and in-
18 serting “may identify”;

19 (C) by amending paragraph (7) to read as
20 follows:

21 “(7)(A) Priority shall be given to lands that—

22 “(i) can be effectively managed and pro-
23 tected and are described in subsection
24 (a)(1)(A);

1 “(ii) to the maximum extent practicable,
2 benefit communities that may not have ade-
3 quate resources to prepare for or respond to
4 coastal hazards or to access coastline, including
5 low-income communities;

6 “(iii) are under an imminent threat of con-
7 version to a use that will degrade or otherwise
8 diminish their natural, undeveloped, or rec-
9 reational state;

10 “(iv) serve to mitigate the adverse impacts
11 caused by coastal population growth on the
12 coastal environment;

13 “(v) benefit a National Estuarine Research
14 Reserve or a national estuarine reserve pro-
15 posed to be designated under section 315;

16 “(vi) are within or adjacent to a national
17 estuary program or other such protected area;

18 “(vii) are under threat due to climate
19 change; or

20 “(viii) may serve to mitigate the adverse
21 effects of climate change, including through
22 long-term carbon storage or facilitating inland
23 migration of coastal ecosystems in response to
24 sea level rise.

1 “(B) Of the lands that are given priority under
2 subparagraph (A), priority shall be given to lands
3 that reflect conservation priorities identified pursu-
4 ant to paragraphs (1) through (4).”; and

5 (D) in paragraph (10), by striking “tri-
6 ennially” and inserting “every 5 years”;

7 (5) in subsection (f)—

8 (A) in paragraph (2)(B), by inserting “for
9 any territory of the United States that is un-
10 able to provide such match,” after “commu-
11 nity,”; and

12 (B) in paragraph (4)—

13 (i) in subparagraph (A)(i), by striking
14 “the land meets the criteria set forth in
15 section 2(b) and” and inserting “such use
16 will further the goals described in sub-
17 section (b) and such interest in land”;

18 (ii) by striking subparagraph (B) and
19 redesignating subparagraph (C) as sub-
20 paragraph (B);

21 (iii) in subparagraph (B) (as so redес-
22 ignated), by striking “described in (A)”
23 and inserting “described in subparagraph
24 (A)”;

1 (iv) by inserting at the end the fol-
2 lowing new subparagraph:

3 “(C) The value of ecosystem services that
4 such interest in land provides, including as a
5 buffer for storm surge, as a habitat for eco-
6 nomically valuable species, and as a long-term
7 carbon store.”;

8 (6) in subsection (g)—

9 (A) by striking “15” and inserting “20”;
10 and

11 (B) by inserting “unless no such acquisi-
12 tion is available, in which case all such funds
13 may be used for other acquisitions that do not
14 benefit a National Estuarine Research Reserve”
15 before the period at the end;

16 (7) in subsection (i)(1)(A), by inserting “unless
17 approved to be held by a qualified non-governmental
18 organization that meets the requirements of sub-
19 section (k)” after “in perpetuity”;

20 (8) by redesignating subsections (k) and (l) as
21 subsections (l) and (m), respectively;

22 (9) by inserting after subsection (j) the fol-
23 lowing:

24 “(k) NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS.—

1 “(1) IN GENERAL.—A non-governmental orga-
2 nization that applies for a grant under this section
3 may only be awarded a grant under subsection (b)
4 to acquire property or an interest in property if such
5 organization, with respect to the property or interest
6 in property—

7 “(A) provides such documentation as the
8 Secretary determines appropriate to dem-
9 onstrate that the agency that is primarily re-
10 sponsible for managing the Coastal and Estua-
11 rine Resilience and Restoration Program of the
12 State in which the property or interest in prop-
13 erty is located has provided written support of
14 such agency for the grant application of such
15 organization;

16 “(B) either—

17 “(i) ensures that the property or in-
18 terest in property is, or will be made, ac-
19 cessible to the public; or

20 “(ii) provides documentation showing
21 that public access to the property or inter-
22 est in property is required to be restricted
23 to maintain the biological integrity, biologi-
24 cal diversity, or environmental health of
25 the property or interest in property; and

“(C) includes in the deed for the property or interest in property a clear statement regarding how the property or interest in property will be transferred to another entity described in subsection (b) if such organization becomes nonviable after the date on which such organization acquires such property or interest in property.

“(2) COMPLIANCE.—The Secretary shall develop objective measures that each non-governmental organization that applies for a grant under this section shall use to demonstrate the compliance of such organization with the requirements of paragraph (1).”; and

(10) in subsection (m), as so redesignated, by striking “fiscal years 2009 through 2013” and inserting “fiscal years 2025 through 2029”.

SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM.

(a) DESIGNATION OF ADDITIONAL NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—

(A) INITIATION.—Not later than 5 years after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall have initiated the designa-

1 tion process for not less than 5 new National
2 Estuarine Research Reserves in the System.

3 (B) DESIGNATION.—Not later than 8
4 years after the date of the enactment of this
5 section, the Secretary shall designate not less
6 than 5 new National Estuarine Research Re-
7 serves in the System.

8 (2) PRIORITIZATION.—In making each designa-
9 tion under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall
10 prioritize nominated estuarine areas that will pro-
11 mote the following with respect to the System:

12 (A) The presence of a National Estuarine
13 Research Reserve in each coastal State.

14 (B) Full representation of biogeographic
15 regions to ensure research in areas with distinct
16 biodiversity or estuarine geography.

17 (3) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the
18 date of the enactment of this section and annually
19 thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a
20 report regarding the status of ongoing efforts to
21 achieve the requirements under this subsection.

22 (b) GUIDELINES FOR TRACKING AND MODELING IM-
23 PACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.—Section 315(c) of the
24 Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C.
25 1461(c)) is amended—

1 (1) by redesignating paragraphs (3) through
2 (5) as paragraphs (4) through (6), respectively; and
3 (2) by inserting after paragraph (2) the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(3) the establishment of coordinated long-term
6 data monitoring and methods throughout the Sys-
7 tem for tracking the impacts of climate change and
8 other stressors on estuarine systems, including im-
9 pacts on lake levels and sea levels;”.

10 (c) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—Section 315(e)(1) of
11 the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C.
12 1461(f)(1)) is amended—

13 (1) in subparagraph (A)—

14 (A) in clause (ii), by inserting “and main-
15 taining” after “constructing”; and

16 (B) in clause (iii), by inserting “research,
17 monitoring, stewardship, training, and” after
18 “conducting”; and

19 (2) in subparagraph (B)—

20 (A) by striking “research and” and insert-
21 ing “research,”; and

22 (B) by inserting “, stewardship, education,
23 and training” after “monitoring”.

1 (d) PROGRAM ELEMENTS.—Section 315 of the
2 Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1461)
3 is amended by adding at the end the following:

4 “(h) SYSTEM-WIDE ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL ESTU-
5 ARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM.—The Secretary
6 shall coordinate System-wide programs and activities in
7 the System, including—

8 “(1) the centralized management and dissemi-
9 nation of data from System observation and moni-
10 toring networks;

11 “(2) employment, through a grant program, of
12 the collaborative research model on coastal research
13 and management priorities to be conducted at Na-
14 tional Estuarine Research Reserves, focused on the
15 priorities determined by the Secretary;

16 “(3) use of National Estuarine Research Re-
17 serves as living laboratories and as preferred loca-
18 tions for placements for fellowship and research po-
19 sitions for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
20 Administration; and

21 “(4) establishing the Margaret A. Davidson
22 Graduate Research Fellowship Program to address
23 key coastal management questions and the coastal
24 research and management priorities of the System
25 and its place-based sites to help scientists and com-

1 communities understand the coastal challenges that may
2 influence future policy and management strategies.

3 “(i) PLACE-BASED PROGRAM ELEMENTS OF NA-
4 TIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM.—
5 Each National Estuarine Research Reserve shall establish
6 and maintain place-based program elements commensu-
7 rate with available funding that include—

8 “(1) a research, monitoring, and observation
9 network that detects environmental change and in-
10 forms suitable adaptation and mitigation strategies
11 to address coastal hazards and environmental
12 change;

13 “(2) living laboratories and preferred places for
14 research on environmental change detection and de-
15 velopment of adaptation strategies to the impacts of
16 such change;

17 “(3) education, outreach, training, and inter-
18 pretive programs that communicate the value and
19 changing dynamics of coastal systems;

20 “(4) stewardship programs that provide science-
21 based tools, habitat management, and restoration
22 and that provide resources and information to in-
23 form coastal management;

1 “(5) coastal training programs that provide
2 technical assistance to coastal communities, resource
3 managers, and coastal decisionmakers;

4 “(6) identifying priority land for acquisition to
5 enhance ecosystem and community resilience to the
6 negative effects of climate change;

7 “(7) the lands and facilities that support such
8 accessible research, monitoring, stewardship, edu-
9 cation, and coastal training activities; and

10 “(8) the engagement of a wide variety of com-
11 munity members, including Tribal nations, Indige-
12 nous communities, and Historic Heritage commu-
13 nities to inform the programs above.

14 “(j) EXISTING USES.—Except as otherwise explicitly
15 provided in a management plan of a National Estuarine
16 Research Reserve, any activity allowed at the time the Na-
17 tional Estuarine Research Reserve is designated may be
18 allowed to continue, including, as applicable—

19 “(1) commercial and recreational fishing;

20 “(2) hunting; and

21 “(3) cultural uses.”.

22 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section
23 318(a)(2) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972
24 (16 U.S.C. 1464(a)(2)) is amended to read as follows:

1 “(2) for grants under section 315, \$47,000,000
2 for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2029.”.

3 (f) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—The Coastal Zone
4 Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.) is
5 amended—

6 (1) in section 304 (16 U.S.C. 1453)—

7 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (13)
8 through (18) as paragraphs (14) through (19),
9 respectively; and

10 (B) by inserting after paragraph (12) the
11 following:

12 “(13) The term ‘National Estuarine Research Re-
13 serve’ means a national estuarine reserve designated under
14 section 315.”;

15 (2) in section 312(c)(1) (16 U.S.C. 1458(c)(1)),
16 by striking “national estuarine reserve established
17 under section 315 of this title” and inserting “Na-
18 tional Estuarine Research Reserve”; and

19 (3) in section 315 (16 U.S.C. 1461)—

20 (A) in subsection (a), by striking “a na-
21 tional estuarine reserve” each place it appears
22 and inserting “a National Estuarine Research
23 Reserve”;

24 (B) in subsection (b)—

1 (i) in the heading, by striking “NA-
 2 TIONAL ESTUARINE RESERVES” and in-
 3 serting “NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH
 4 RESERVES”; and

5 (ii) by striking “a national estuarine
 6 reserve” and inserting “a National Estua-
 7 rine Research Reserve”;

8 (C) in subsection (e), by striking “national
 9 estuarine reserve” each place it appears and in-
 10 serting “National Estuarine Research Reserve”;

11 (D) in subsection (f), by striking “national
 12 estuarine reserve” each place it appears and in-
 13 serting “National Estuarine Research Reserve”;
 14 and

15 (E) in subsection (g), by striking “national
 16 estuarine reserves” each place it appears and
 17 inserting “National Estuarine Research Re-
 18 serves”.

19 (g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

20 (1) COASTAL STATE.—The term “coastal
 21 State” has the meaning given the term “coastal
 22 state” in section 304 of title III of the Coastal Zone
 23 Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1453), as ap-
 24 plicable to such title.

1 (2) NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RE-
2 SERVE.—The term “National Estuarine Research
3 Reserve” means a national estuarine reserve des-
4 ignated under section 315 of the Coastal Zone Man-
5 agement Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1461).

6 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” has
7 the meaning given the term in section 304 of the
8 Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C.
9 1453).

10 (4) SYSTEM.—The term “System” means the
11 National Estuarine Research Reserve System estab-
12 lished by section 315 of the Coastal Zone Manage-
13 ment Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1461).

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