



CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM
326 West Marion Ave, Punta Gorda FL 33950-4416
941/575-5090, Toll-free 866/835-5785
www.CHNEP.org

June 30, 2017

Councilman Fraize
City of Venice
401 W Venice Ave,
Venice, FL 34285

RE: City of Venice's Membership in the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

Dear Councilman Fraize:

As a CHNEP Policy Committee Member, I am writing to you to request your assistance with regards to two items relating to the City of Venice's Membership in the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP). As you are aware, having a National Estuary Program in our region is a valuable asset and facilitates bringing millions of federal dollars, as well as large contributions from state agencies, to supplement local governmental investments in the protection and restoration of our water resources – vital to our economy and quality of life here in the City of Venice.

However, the National Estuary Program has been proposed for total federal defunding and elimination. Congress will be weighing this proposal in the coming months and we are asking you, as our partner along with the other local governmental members of the CHNEP, *to consider signing on to the attached letter to indicate your strong support for continued full funding of the Program.* If the Board approves signing on, please let us know, so we can work with your staff to add you as a signatory. We would also be delighted to make a presentation to the Board if there is an interest in us doing so.

Additionally, the demonstrated investment the City of Venice has as a financial supporter of the CHNEP will be more crucial than ever during this federal reassessment. We are *asking all cities who are not already contributing at least \$5,000 a year to consider doing so next fiscal year* to show they have "skin in the game" as committed partners in the Program's success. We greatly appreciate that the City of Venice is currently contributing \$2,500. However, the coming fiscal year may be a good time for the City to consider increasing its contribution. This will help to reassure the federal government that federal funding is needed and appreciated – hopefully ensuring that the more than \$600,000 a year that they provide for protecting and restoring Southwest Florida's waters will continue.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and please feel free to contact me at (941) 575-3392 to discuss further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Hecker".

Jennifer Hecker
Executive Director

Cc Mr. John Holic, Mayor
Ms. Edward Lavalley, City Manager

Working together to protect the natural environment of Florida from Venice to Bonita Springs to Winter Haven

July XX, 2017

Senator Bill Nelson
716 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Thomas Rooney
2160 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

Senator Marco Rubio
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Vern Buchanan
2104 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Darren Soto
1429 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Dennis Ross
436 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Francis Rooney
120 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Honorable Florida Senators and Representatives:

We as local governmental leaders are writing to respectfully request your support for full federal funding of our National Estuary Programs (NEPs) – including the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP). As members of the CHNEP, we greatly value the added federal staffing and resources that the NEP contributes to protecting the water resources in our region. This is especially important given that CHNEP area includes five National Wildlife Refuges, numerous federally endangered species, as well as a portion of the greater Everglades ecosystem – a national treasure.

The NEPs have enjoyed strong bipartisan Congressional support. Since important reforms in the recent federal reauthorization (S.1523) last year created a competitive program to address urgent challenges and maximize funds received by our national estuaries, while streamlining the administrative costs of the program. However, there has been a proposal to lessen or even discontinue future funding to the NEPs. For these aforementioned and following reasons, we request your assistance in ensuring that NEPs continue to receive full funding in the next federal budget.

NEPs: Strongly Supported and Relied Upon by Local and State Governments

NEPs rely upon local stakeholders as partners in a unique decision-making framework to collectively identify and fund local water resource protection priorities. Local and state governmental funds supplement federal funds to the NEP, but we rely upon NEP resources to assist stewarding resources of national significance in our jurisdictions. NEPs provide the state and local governments with valuable technical, management, and communication assistance that otherwise would not be available. They also assist in implementing activities such as stormwater and infrastructure projects, seagrass and shellfish restoration which support fishing and tourist industries, science and monitoring to guide decision-

making, and innovative education programs designed to engage the next generation of Americans in protecting these resources critical to our economic growth and quality of life. All of the activities they undertake with us are based on consensus and the best available science.

NEPs: Public-Private Partners Creating Jobs and Supporting Small Businesses

NEPs engage businesses, states, localities and other community members to develop solutions for tough problems. The NEP's public-private partnerships stretch federal dollars to provide successful on-the-ground results driven by diverse stakeholders. The CHNEP is able to garner private contributions and in-kind services to produce \$38 dollars of on-the-ground restoration for every public dollar it receives. This high return on investment is evidence that the federal funds are being effectively leveraged.

NEP partners include commercial agriculture and fisheries, energy and water utilities, local restaurants and tourist businesses, construction and landscaping professionals, engineering and mining companies, state and local governments, colleges and universities, and other community organizations. One of the private sector partners of the CHNEP is Mosaic Inc., who is actively engaged on CHNEP committees and contributes funding towards CHNEP restoration and environmental education outreach initiatives. Also, much of the money given to NEPs is used to contract work out to small businesses in the community to assist with restoration, outreach, and research efforts, which has a significant positive effect on our local economy. The collaborative public-private partnerships the NEPs foster and create are essential to supporting jobs in our tourism and real-estate based economy.

Conclusion

The NEP consists of 28 voluntary programs established by the Clean Water Act to protect and improve estuaries of national significance. Each NEP engages its local community in a non-regulatory, consensus-driven, and science-based process. We would greatly appreciate your strong support for ensuring that as Congress completes work on the FY 2018 appropriations measure, it fully funds the NEPs and reflects the recent reauthorization consistent with Public Law 114-162.

Sincerely,