

## Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act introduced May 17; bipartisan bill will support funding to protect and restore estuaries

Press Release from Rep Mike Levin's office:

**Washington, D.C.** – Today, U.S. Representatives Mike Levin (D-CA) and Brian Mast (R-FL) introduced the bipartisan [\*Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act\*](#) to strengthen federal efforts to protect estuary habitats like the San Mateo Creek, San Luis Rey River, San Elijo Lagoon, and many others. Their bill reauthorizes funding for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program at \$60 million per year through 2026, which will provide crucial resources to help state and local governments preserve the conservation, recreation, ecological, historical, and aesthetic values of estuaries, and also adds climate change mitigation as one of the program's goals. The bill also directs the Secretary of Commerce to designate at least five new National Estuarine Research Reserves, and would increase the authorization for the program to \$47 million to account for the increased number of reserves. That funding would support institutions like the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve.

“Our Congressional district is home to many cherished lagoons and other estuaries that are important for local ecosystems, recreation, and more,” **said Rep. Levin.** “It’s critical that we invest in preserving these lands and waterways for surrounding habitats and communities, and to help mitigate the effects of climate change. I’m proud to introduce this bipartisan bill with Rep. Mast to revive the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program and create five new National Estuarine Research Reserves to protect these lands and waters for future generations.”

“The Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act will help protect and restore what makes coastal communities like the Treasure Coast and Palm Beaches great—our waterways,” **Rep. Mast said.** “This bipartisan bill will help state and local governments fund the necessary steps to restore our waterways and protect the environment clean for generations to come.”

The Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program was created in 1972 and provides grants to state and local governments for property acquisition to protect coastal ecosystems and wetlands. Since 2002, the program has protected more than 110,000 acres of coastal and estuarine land. However, dedicated Congressional appropriations for the program were eliminated in 2013 and other federal funding mechanisms ran out in 2017. Rep. Levin’s bill would reauthorize funding for the program at \$60 million per year from fiscal years 2022 through 2026. In addition to adding climate change mitigation to the purposes of the program, the bill expands the program to restore developed property in vulnerable coastal and estuarine areas to restore ecological function, allow for shoreline migration, and protect coastal communities.

The *Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act* also strengthens the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, a network of 30 coastal sites covering 1.4 million acres designated to protect and study estuarine systems. The reserves specialize in research and data monitoring to support conservation and management efforts locally and around the country. The bill directs the Secretary of Commerce to designate at least five

new National Estuarine Research Reserves and increases the authorization for the program to \$47 million to account for the increased number of reserves.

The bill also includes a number of other provisions to adjust the federal-local cost share for qualified projects, codify several relevant National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) programs that have not been recognized in statute, and more. The bill is endorsed by the Coastal States Organization, the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association, Oceana, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the National Audubon Society, Nature Collective, and the Buena Vista Audubon.

"For the past 50 years, the coastal States, Territories, and Commonwealths have effectively tackled the nation's most pressing and emergent coastal issues through the programs under the Coastal Zone Management Act," **said Derek Brockbank, Executive Director of the Coastal States Organization.** "This legislation provides critical new tools for coastal zone management through amendments to the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and establishing a Coastal and Estuarine Resilience and Restoration Program."

"We applaud Congressional Representatives Levin and Mast for their tremendous, bipartisan effort to catalyze the reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act," **says Rebecca Roth, director of the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association (NERRA).** "Through this unique and visionary legislation, coastal and estuarine programs like the National Estuarine Research Reserve System have exceeded expectations to meet the changing needs of our coastal communities. NERRA looks forward to working with all members of congress to ensure that a new and robust CZMA is there to support our programs as they work to build community resilience in the face of climate change and increasing coastal hazards."

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