

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
1233 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
H-204, United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

November 14, 2018

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

We the undersigned organizations are writing in support of H.R. 5787, the Strengthening Coastal Communities Act. Introduced by Rep. Neal Dunn (R-FL), this bill would take steps to modernize the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) by updating the maps that denote the boundaries of the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS). The CBRA is a Reagan-era program enacted by Congress in 1982. The program boasts strong support from both Republicans and Democrats because of its tremendous fiscal and conservation value.

The CBRA was designed to prevent needless government spending by restricting Federal agency expenditures in sensitive coastal areas. As it currently stands, the American taxpayer is responsible for billions of dollars in spending to subsidize and underwrite the construction and repair of structures in storm and flood-prone areas. The CBRA does not prohibit any activities within the boundaries of the CBRS but, in the words of President Reagan, addresses, “a national problem with less Federal involvement, not more.”

The CBRS includes 3.5 million acres of islands, beaches, wetlands, and coastal waters along the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Great Lakes, which are denoted by maps created by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Because the CBRS prohibits most federal funds to support the construction, maintenance, and insurance of structures built within the boundaries of the CBRS, these activities are far less frequent when the federal taxpayer is not footing the bill. Consequently, the CBRA has proven to be an invaluable conservation tool responsible for the protection of critical wildlife populations and the habitat upon which they rely. These are acres used heavily by sportsmen, conservationists, and other outdoor recreationists. The CBRA also promotes public safety by withdrawing federal funds for development on dangerous hurricane- and storm-prone coastal areas.

For these reasons, the CBRA boasts broad bipartisan support. The program prevents billions in needless government spending, protects coastline critical to the health and sustainability of wildlife and habitat, and sends a sensible public safety message. In 1990, the CBRA was expanded to

include additional areas, a step supported by Republicans and Democrats alike. The program was last reauthorized in 2006.

In November 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service transmitted to Congress a “pilot set” of maps that update the CBRS boundaries in five states: Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana. The maps were produced in response to legislation that directed the FWS to conduct a pilot project for ways in which the CBRS maps could be modernized and made available electronically.

On February 27, 2018, the House Natural Resources’ Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans held a hearing on H.R. 2947 and H.R. 4880, bills that now represent the foundation of H.R. 5787. On Wednesday, June 13, the Committee passed H.R. 5787 with unanimous support.

We, the undersigned, support passage of H.R. 5787 and urge you and your colleagues to consider this legislation favorably as it moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

American Flood Coalition
Association of State Floodplain Managers
Association of State Wetland Managers
Audubon Florida
Audubon North Carolina
Audubon South Carolina
Florida Wildlife Federation
National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Refuge Association
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
R Street
Reinsurance Association of America
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Waccamaw Audubon Society