

United States Congress

October 31, 2016

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
410 Dirksen SOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works
456 Dirksen SOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2251 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
2164 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
1329 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Boxer, Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member DeFazio, Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

As you work towards a bicameral agreement on the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016 (S.2848/H.R.5303), we request that you retain the restoration subtitle of S.2848, containing five standalone bills focused on the ecological restoration of Lake Tahoe, the Great Lakes, the Delaware River Basin, the Long Island Sound, and the Columbia River Basin in any final bill.

The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act, the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act, the Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act, and the Columbia River Basin Restoration Act are bicameral proposals aimed at bolstering ecosystem restoration programs and improving the management of some of our nation's most important multi-state lakes, watersheds, and natural resources. These landscapes play important roles in their region's water supply, economic vitality, and environmental health, while contributing significantly to the national economy. Combined, they impact approximately 30 percent of the states in the nation, covering tens of thousands of square miles and safeguarding drinking water for tens of millions of U.S. citizens. These bills represent collaborative efforts among federal, agencies, as well as strong partnerships with state, local, tribal, and private sector partners that leverage every federal dollar spent to maximize returns. Each of these proposals are important to include in any legislation focused on improving our nation's water resources:

- 1) The Lake Tahoe Restoration Act (S.1724): this legislation reauthorizes important Lake Tahoe restoration activities begun in 1997 and refocuses federal, state, and local efforts towards reducing wildfire threats, improving water quality and clarity, and combating invasive species all important to the local economy at one of the most visited lakes in the world. Known as “the Jewel of the Sierras,” Lake Tahoe is one of the largest, deepest, and clearest lakes in the world. In addition to being a scenic and ecological treasure, Lake Tahoe is one of the most important recreational resources of the United States, offering skiing, water sports, biking, camping, and hiking to millions of Americans each year. Addressing modern day threats to the Lake is critical to its long-term ecological health and the region’s economy. This legislation renews the federal commitment to Lake Tahoe, where close to 80 percent of the land surrounding Lake Tahoe is public land, including more than 150,000 acres of national forest, and builds off a strong public-private partnership developed over the past twenty years.
- 2) The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act (S.1024): this legislation authorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a successful program that bolsters federal, state, and local efforts to clean up degraded toxic hotspots, restores habitat for fish and wildlife, thwarts Asian carp and other invasive species, and prevents polluted runoff that closes beaches and causes harmful algal blooms in the eight-state Great Lakes region. It is important to note that the reauthorization of these programs passed out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee via S.1024 by a voice vote and the House approved H.AMDT.1474 to H.R.5303 by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 407-18.
- 3) The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act (S.921): this legislation facilitates the development and implementation of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service action plan to sustain and enhance habitat, water quality, and water management improvements in the Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania basin encompassing the Delaware River. The Delaware River is the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi and supplies drinking water to fifteen million people in two of the largest cities in the United States, New York City and Philadelphia. The basin is a vital watershed that contributes \$25 billion to the region's economy and fuels local communities by supporting jobs in the maritime, agriculture, tourism, hunting, fishing, and wildlife industries.
- 4) The Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act (S.1674): this legislation reauthorizes programs to carry out collaborative restoration projects through the Long Island Sound Study office, which are aimed at upgrading wastewater facilities, protecting wetlands, and reducing non-point source pollution in the Long Island Sound. 24 million people live within 50 miles of the Long Island Sound, which has been designated as an estuary of national significance. For every \$1 appropriated for the Long Island Sound Study, \$87 has been leveraged from other federal, state, local, and private funding sources, totaling more than \$3.8 billion. These resources have significantly reduced the amount of nitrogen entering the LIS from sewage treatment plants by 35,000,000 lbs. per year as of 2013, restored at least 1,548 acres, and protected 2,580 acres of habitat land.
- 5) Columbia River Basin Restoration Act (S.1394): this legislation authorizes a voluntary, competitive Columbia Basin grant program for projects that assist in eliminating or

reducing pollution, cleaning up contaminated sites, improving water quality, monitoring, and promoting citizen engagement. The Columbia River is the largest salmon-producing river system in the world and was designated an "Estuary of National Significance" in 1995 and a "Large Aquatic Ecosystem" (LAE) in 2006. However, it is the only LAE Large Aquatic Ecosystem without a dedicated restoration program or support from Congress. This river serves about approximately 8 million people and, with its tributaries, powers 14 dams, generating over 75 percent of the Northwest's energy.

Advancing these five proposals is critical to the restoration of nationally significant water bodies and ecosystems. The work authorized by these initiatives will address threats to public health, preserve ecosystems of national significance, bolster economic growth, and improve water security. Therefore, we ask that you include these proposals in any final bicameral Water Resources Development Act agreement.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices should you have any further questions

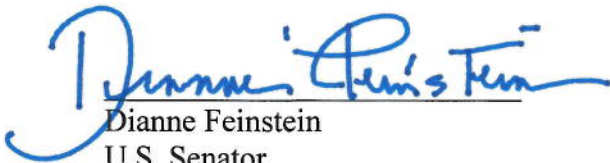
Sincerely,



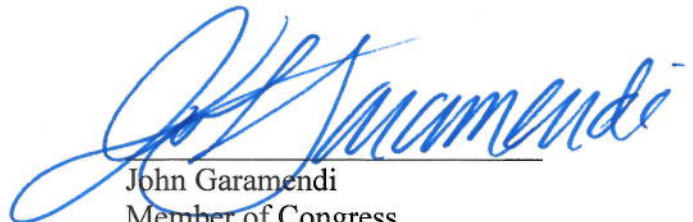
Dean Heller
U.S. Senator



Mark E. Amodei
Member of Congress



Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



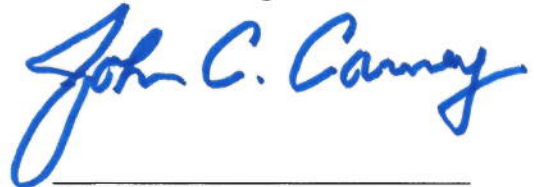
Mark Kirk
U.S. Senator



Robert J. Dold
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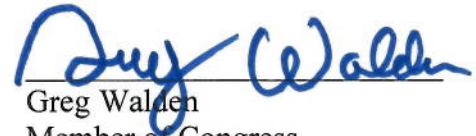
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John Carney
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Jeffrey A. Merkley
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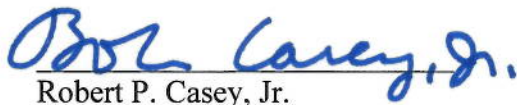
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Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



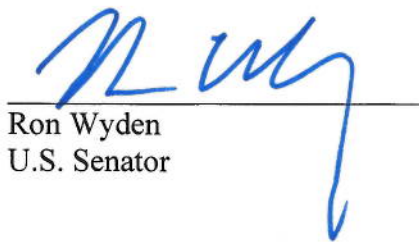
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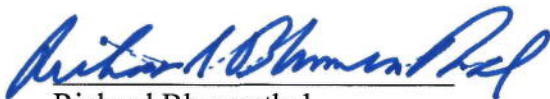
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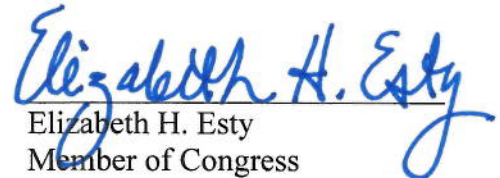
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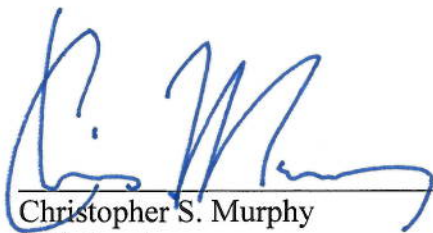
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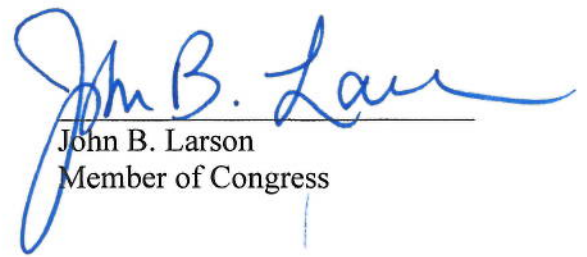
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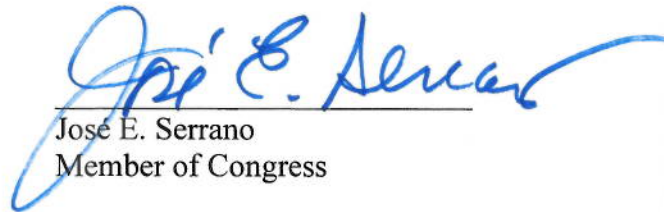
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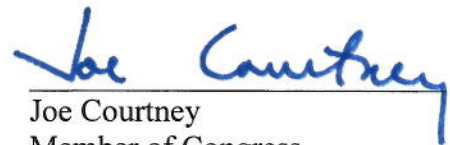
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Rosa DeLauro
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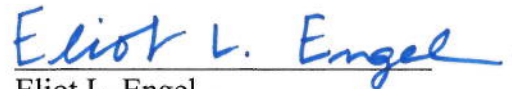
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Chris Gibson
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Eliot L. Engel
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Richard L. Hanna
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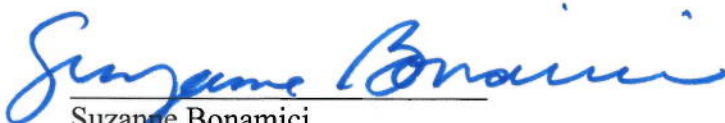
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