

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 8, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write to lend our support for the Long Island Sound Watershed (LISW), which is applying for National Priorities Funding under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The LISW-RCPP proposal advanced to the second half of the two-phase evaluation process and we look forward to your final decision in late January. As you know, the RCPP program was created in the 2014 Farm Bill to address pressing environmental and conservation issues on a regional level, using a multi-faceted, comprehensive approach that engages relevant stakeholders.

As members that represent the LISW region, we are very supportive of this RCPP application. With over 600 miles of coastline, the Sound is an estuary that forms the northern border of Long Island, NY and the southern boundary of Connecticut. At 1,320 square miles, it is the 2nd largest estuary in the United States. The watershed begins at the headwaters of the Connecticut River on the Quebec border and encompasses 17,814 square miles in six states (CT, MA, NH, NY, RI, and VT) and Quebec. Over 90 percent of the fresh water that drains into the Sound comes from three major rivers: the Connecticut, Housatonic, and Thames Rivers.

Funding the LISW-RCPP proposal will provide critical technical and financial support to:

- reduce non-point source pollution from urban as well as traditional agricultural sources along this vast watershed;
- decrease flooding and improve water quality by protecting floodplain forests and by installing green infrastructure retrofits along nearby streets and parking lots;
- provide small and large farmers within the watershed with techniques to protect local streams, rivers, and the Long Island Sound

There are already several highly successful partnerships among various stakeholders in the region committed to improving and protecting the Long Island Sound Watershed through the leadership of the Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation. These include multiple state and local entities, universities, friends groups, watershed associations, and state and national land and conservation NGOs. RCPP funding and designation will provide a framework for a comprehensive approach to address environmental and conservation issues on a regional level.

We believe the Long Island Sound Watershed is an ideal candidate for funding under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



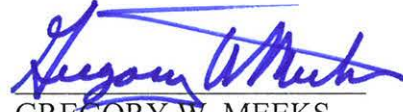
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ELIOT L. ENGEL
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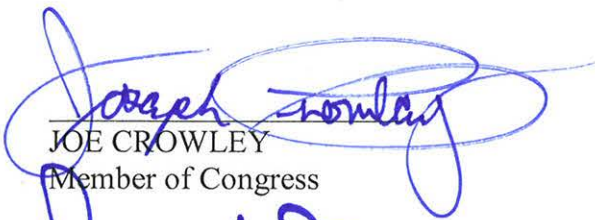
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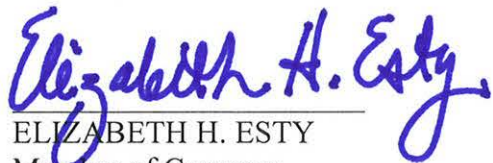
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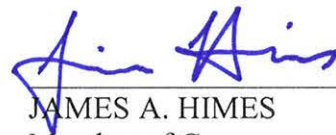
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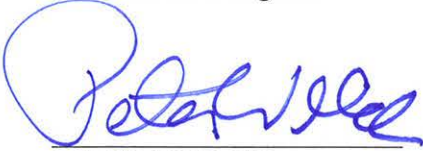
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