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United States Senate

September 20, 2022

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The Honorable Richard W. Spinrad, Ph.D.
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Administrator Spinrad,

I write to express my support for the full and fair consideration of the Ipswich River Watershed Association's (IRWA) project application entitled "Initiating Transformational Habitat Restoration in the Great Marsh Area of Critical Environmental Concern," submitted to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants program. If awarded, the IRWA will use the funding to remove or remediate barriers within the river's tidal zone that are inhibiting the restoration of the Great Marsh.

The Great Marsh Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) includes 25,500 acres of barrier beach, dunes, saltmarsh, and water bodies across five municipalities and four watersheds. It contains the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, a key location along the Atlantic Flyway Migration route, and is central to the region's fisheries, coastal resiliency, and local economies around fishing and shellfishing, tourism, and recreation.

To restore and preserve this vital ecological and economic resource, the IRWA intends to assess the man-made dams and other barriers along the Ipswich River, develop plans for how best to mitigate the ecological damage of these barriers, and continue environmental restoration efforts within the ACEC. Several of these barriers are particularly harmful because of their location at the sensitive intersection between salt and fresh water, and the project will have a particular eye toward how removal or alteration of these barriers would benefit fisheries and fish passage along the river. Restoration of the ecosystem within the ACEC would also allow the Great Marsh to better serve one of its key natural purposes of protecting against coastal flooding and erosion by creating a cushion between dry land and the sea.

This project is highly aligned with NOAA's programmatic goals to restore estuarine habitats and ecosystems, conserve endangered species, and enhance resilience to climate change, storm events, and sea level rise. I encourage you to give IRWA's application your fair and full consideration. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator