

February 28, 2023

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
U.S. Senate  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
U.S. Senate  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Whitehouse and Cassidy,

The undersigned hunting, recreational fishing, boating, and other conservation organizations write to express our strong support for the reintroduction of S. 373, the Reinvesting in America's Shoreline Economies & Ecosystems Act (RISEE Act). This common-sense, bipartisan legislation will provide much needed investments to enhance coastal resiliency, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and safeguard outdoor recreational opportunities.

Outdoor recreation is a powerful force in the American economy. Prior to the pandemic, the outdoor industry, led by hunting, fishing, and boating generated \$778 billion in economic output, comprised 2.2 percent of U.S. Gross Domestic Product and supported 5.2 million jobs. Additionally, a recent joint report by the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration found that recreation and tourism are the top contributors to the significant economic footprint of the nation's oceans and Great Lakes. The Covid-19 pandemic renewed enthusiasm for Americans to return to the outdoors and engage in healthy activities like recreational boating, angling, and hunting, all of which are important to the American System of Conservation Funding through their contributions to the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs. It is imperative that we have healthy coastal habitats that continue to bolster outdoor recreation and perpetuate the additional conservation investments these activities provide.

The RISEE Act diversifies federal conservation funding by dedicating a portion of offshore wind revenue to coastal resiliency investments. These funds would be directed to states adjacent to where production occurs to be used for projects such as coastal resiliency, wetland restoration, hurricane protection, and infrastructure improvements to protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and other natural resources. Small businesses and communities in rural, vulnerable areas often face the brunt of natural disasters and depend on robust, resilient infrastructure to be able to make a living. The RISEE Act presents a unique opportunity to utilize existing resources, such as the nation's vast offshore wind energy development revenues, to supplement federal and state efforts to protect coastal economies and natural resources.

Our organizations also support amending the Gulf of Mexico Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) to dedicate more of the existing offshore energy production revenue from the Gulf to support regional coastal restoration and resiliency. Specifically, we support lifting the cap on currently shared revenues as well as lifting the \$125 million state-side funding cap on the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These changes allow for more equitable resource sharing between the states and federal conservation programs. This additional funding would facilitate critical investments in environmental protections and resilient infrastructure projects in vulnerable communities

threatened by sea level rise, coastal erosion, and flooding. It is more important now than ever before to ensure communities are prepared and well equipped to bounce back from extreme weather events as their homes, businesses, and lives lay in the path of increasingly dangerous and costly storms.

In short, healthy, resilient coastlines and estuaries are critically important for outdoor recreation, coastal and marine dependent fish and wildlife populations, local economies, and the people and businesses who live along or near our nation's shores. We appreciate your leadership on this bill and look forward to working with you and your offices to realize its passage in the 118th.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association  
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers  
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust  
Center for Sportfishing Policy  
Coastal Conservation Association  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
The Conservation Fund  
The Nature Conservancy  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership  
Wildlife Mississippi

CC:

The Honorable Joe Manchin, Chair, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
The Honorable John Barrasso, Ranking Member, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee