

American Fisheries Society – American Fly Fishing Trade Association – Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies – American Sportfishing Association – B.A.S.S., LLC – Berkley Conservation Institute, Pure Fishing – Bonefish and Tarpon Trust – Campfire Club of America – Center For Coastal Conservation – Coastal Conservation Association – Delta Waterfowl – Ducks Unlimited – International Game Fish Association – Izaak Walton League of America – National Marine Manufacturers Association – National Wildlife Federation – Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association – Pheasants Forever – Quail Forever – The Billfish Foundation – The Nature Conservancy – Wildlife Management Institute – The Wildlife Society – Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Dear Senators:

February 14, 2012

We are writing on behalf of the country's leading conservation and sportsmen's organizations and trade associations in support of the RESTORE the Gulf Coast Act (S. 1400). We urge you to vote for it if offered as an amendment to the transportation bill.

RESTORE represents extraordinary bipartisan consensus among lawmakers in the Gulf of Mexico region and is a crucial measure that ensures funds from the Clean Water Act and other penalties are not diverted in unrelated directions or simply returned to the U.S. Treasury. RESTORE instead invests penalty funds in habitat restoration, conservation and other projects that will restore the health of the Gulf of Mexico for the benefit of all Americans.

The hundreds of thousands of sportsmen we represent consider the Gulf an extraordinarily important natural resource. The Mississippi River Delta alone supports some of **the best hunting and fishing in the world**. It hosts millions of ducks and geese during the winter -- roughly 70 percent of the waterfowl that use the Central and Mississippi flyways. Louisiana is one of the only places where you can catch bass, redfish, and tuna all within 25 miles from shore. Roughly one-third of all saltwater recreational fishing trips take place in the Gulf of Mexico. Sportsmen and sportswomen rely on clean water to ensure enjoyable and productive hunting and angling. When wetlands are destroyed and streams are polluted, we are often the first to be directly impacted. Consequently, hunters and anglers have consistently advocated for the conservation of our states' and our nation's waters and wetlands.

The Gulf is also an engine of commerce. It produces roughly 40 percent of all the seafood in the lower 48 states. The region is home to 10 of our nation's 15 largest ports, while over 25 percent of the nation's waterborne exports pass through Louisiana ports alone.

The Deepwater Horizon Spill, now considered our nation's worst oil spill ever, caused significant damage to the region. The RESTORE ACT will ensure that the Clean Water Act fines collected from the responsible parties are used to help restore the Gulf environment, communities, and economy.

Thank you for your consideration.