



Photo courtesy of Riverkeeper

New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act (H.R. 4677)

A watershed moment for 15 million people — and all Americans

BENEFITS + IMPACTS:

- Direct the Secretary of the Interior to **enhance collaboration and coordinate restoration activities** at all levels of government.
- Establish a program to **coordinate restoration and award grants** to help fund approved plans and restoration projects in local communities.
- Ensure that restoration efforts utilize **science-based principles** to protect fish and wildlife habitats, improve water quality, increase public access to the estuary, mitigate flood risks, and develop public outreach and educational activities.
- **Authorize \$50 million annually** through fiscal year 2026 to accomplish these goals.

The NY-NJ Harbor and the watersheds of New York and New Jersey that flow into this national resource provide enormous economic and environmental benefits not just to the region but the entire nation.

Along with supplying the country's most densely populated region with **clean water**, they host some of the **busiest U.S. ports**, provide opportunities for **tourism** and **outdoor recreation** that attract people from around the world and improve **public health**, sustain **significant fisheries and critical wildlife habitat**, and protect **businesses and vital infrastructure** from flooding and rising sea levels.

These waterways **play a critical role in enhancing Americans' quality of life, health and prosperity**, and in restoring communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. Local partnerships are strong and regional priorities have been established through several science-based and consensus-driven plans to manage these natural resources. Federal leadership and resources will strengthen these partnerships and deliver on-the-ground public benefits across local jurisdictions.

The **New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act** also would make the federal government a stronger partner in protecting and restoring the watersheds that flow into New York-New Jersey Harbor (including the Hudson, Mohawk, Raritan, Passaic, Hackensack and Bronx River watersheds), investing in on-the-ground projects that will improve **accessibility, habitat, climate resiliency** and **economic opportunity** for the 15 million Americans living near them—and for all Americans.

It's time to turn the tide and rebuild this valuable and ecologically vital system of watersheds, ensuring it can serve as a resource to local communities — and the entire nation — for many years to come.

The New York-New Jersey Watershed Act is supported by:



This document was prepared by Scenic Hudson for groups supporting the NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act.

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Chair
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
1332 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act (H.R. 4677)

As representatives of a diverse cross-section of organizations involved across New York and New Jersey, we're writing in support of the New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act. NY-NJ Harbor and the watersheds draining into this natural and economic resource provide enormous benefits not just to the region but the entire nation.

Along with supplying clean water to some 15 million Americans living in one of the country's most densely populated and economically diverse regions, the harbor and its watersheds — including the Hudson, Mohawk, Raritan, Passaic, Hackensack, and Bronx rivers — host some of the busiest U.S. ports, provide opportunities for tourism and outdoor recreation that attract people from around the world and improve public health, sustain significant fisheries and critical wildlife habitat, and protect businesses and vital infrastructure from flooding and rising sea levels.

H.R. 4677 offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to secure a coordinated, watershed-wide program built upon decades of efforts to restore some of the nation's most impaired and degraded waters. Federal partnerships in the watersheds of Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River, Long Island Sound, Lake Champlain, the Great Lakes, and others have successfully demonstrated how such a program can deliver direct benefits to the environment, local communities, and state economies. Notably, the grant program authorized by this legislation is directed to provide resources specifically to environmental justice communities. Maintaining a progressive cost-share formula as envisioned in the legislation is an important component of building an equitable and just watershed grants program. Our organizations stand ready to implement projects and deliver tangible benefits to communities within our region.

These waterways play a critical role in enhancing Americans' quality of life, health, and prosperity, and in restoring communities disproportionately challenged by climate change. Local partnerships are strong and regional priorities have been established through dozens of science-based, consensus-driven plans to manage these natural resources and protect fish and wildlife habitats, improve water quality, increase public access to the water, mitigate flood risks, and develop public outreach and educational activities. In addition to helping to implement these locally approved plans, federal leadership, coordination, and resources will amplify their impacts by promoting collaboration that will ensure on-the-ground public benefits span the entire region.

The NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act is vitally important to the region's future. We thank you for taking the time to review our comments and urge you to support H.R. 4677.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Cherson
Senior Manager of Government Affairs
Riverkeeper

Andy Bicking
Director of Government Relations and Public Policy
Scenic Hudson

Greg Remaud
Baykeeper and Chief Executive Officer
NY/NJ Baykeeper

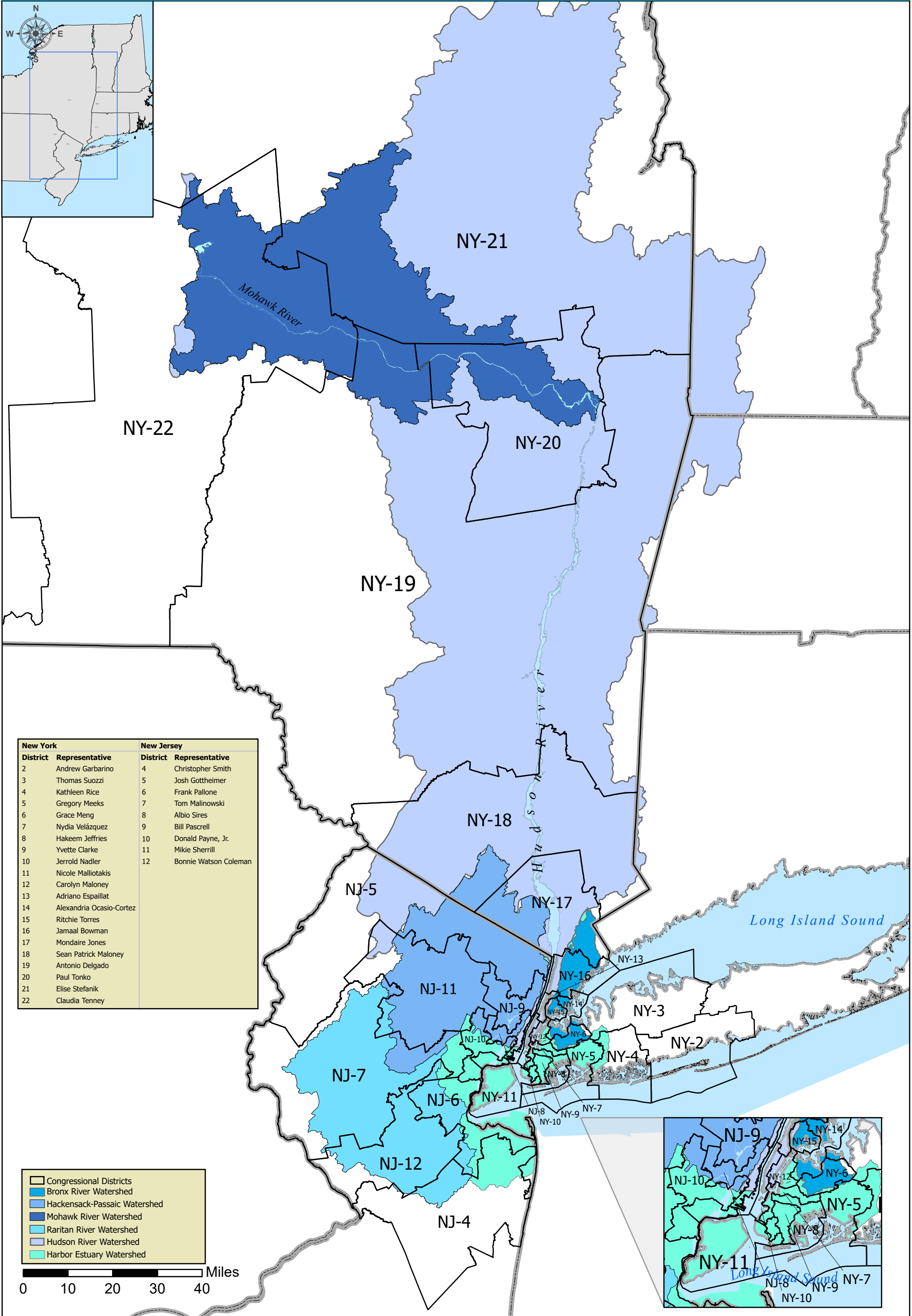
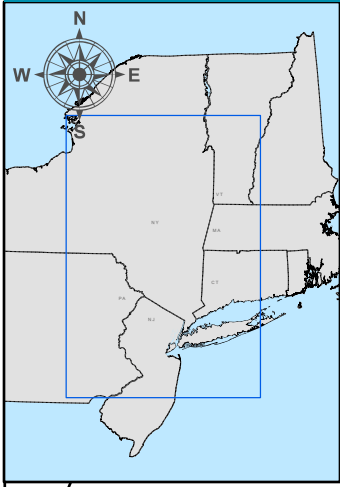
CC: heather.pacheco@mail.house.gov

The Honorable Raul Grivalva, Chair, Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources

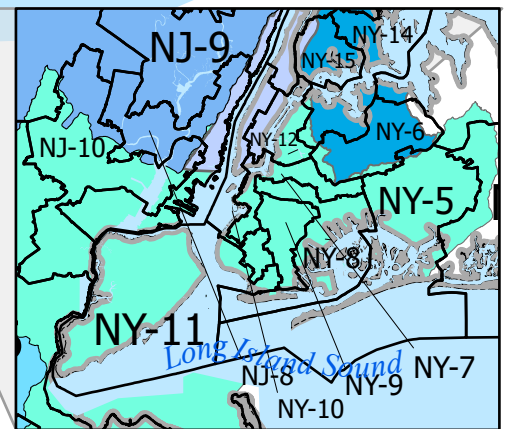
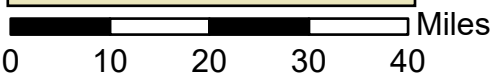
The Honorable Paul Tonko, Member, Committee on Natural Resources

NY/NJ Watershed Congressional Districts



New York		New Jersey	
District	Representative	District	Representative
2	Andrew Garbarino	4	Christopher Smith
3	Thomas Suozzi	5	Josh Gottheimer
4	Kathleen Rice	6	Frank Pallone
5	Gregory Meeks	7	Tom Malinowski
6	Grace Meng	8	Albio Sires
7	Nydia Velázquez	9	Bill Pascrell
8	Hakeem Jeffries	10	Donald Payne, Jr.
9	Yvette Clarke	11	Mikie Sherrill
10	Jerrold Nadler	12	Bonnie Watson Coleman
11	Nicole Malliotakis		
12	Carolyn Maloney		
13	Adriano Espaillat		
14	Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez		
15	Ritchie Torres		
16	Jamaal Bowman		
17	Mondaire Jones		
18	Sean Patrick Maloney		
19	Antonio Delgado		
20	Paul Tonko		
21	Elise Stefanik		
22	Claudia Tenney		

	Congressional Districts
	Bronx River Watershed
	Hackensack-Passaic Watershed
	Mohawk River Watershed
	Raritan River Watershed
	Hudson River Watershed
	Harbor Estuary Watershed





Tonko Unveils NY-NJ Watershed Protection Act

Legislation will mitigate flood risks & improve clean water, economic viability of waterway for millions of Americans

Halfmoon, September 3, 2021



HALFMOON, NY—Congressman Paul D. Tonko was joined by local stakeholders today to announce his newly introduced, [New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act](#), legislation to protect and restore hundreds of miles of waterways that flow through the Hudson Valley, across New Jersey, and into New York-New Jersey Harbor, strengthening resilience against storm surges and improving accessibility and economic opportunity for the millions of Americans.

“Not only do our waterways offer cherished places for us to gather and connect with one another, they help protect communities from flood risks and provide significant environmental and economic value for our region,” **Congressman**

Tonko said. "As America's most crowded watershed, the New York-New Jersey Watershed serves a vital role for millions. Despite its central importance in maintaining local ecosystems and spurring growth, the watershed remains significantly underfunded. My New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act turns the tide for this waterway, implementing a coordinated restoration effort to bolster resistance against dangerous storm surges and generate substantial economic returns. I urge my colleagues to support this critical bill that will ensure our watershed can serve as a resource to our communities for many years to come."

The [New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act](#):

- Directs the Secretary of the Interior to build on and coordinate restoration activities at all levels of government.
- Establishes a program to coordinate restoration and award grants to help fund restoration projects in local communities.
 - The program would ensure that restoration efforts utilize science-based principles to protect fish and wildlife habitats, improve water quality, increase public access to the estuary, mitigate flood risks, deliver funds to environmental justice communities, and develop public outreach and educational activities.
- Authorizes \$50,000,000 annually through fiscal year 2027 to accomplish these goals.

"The New York-New Jersey Harbor and its associated watersheds, including the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, are economic powerhouses that help sustain diverse communities and provide habitat for many imperiled plants and animals," said **Andy Bicking, Director of Government Relations and Public Policy for Scenic Hudson**. "Yet as precious as these waterways are, they all are burdened by a history of poorly planned development and now climate change, both of which threaten people's access to clean water and long-cherished waterfronts. State and local governments are doing their part to address these challenges, but the federal government can do better. Congressman Tonko's New York-New Jersey Watershed Act represents a critical step forward to ensure these waterways remain a vital resource for local communities and the entire nation for many years to come."

"We are extremely grateful to Congressman Tonko for this important regional watershed legislation that includes resources to create nature-based flood resiliency and wildlife habitat protection for underserved communities along the lower Passaic River, Raritan Bay and throughout the urban core of the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary," said **Greg Remaud, CEO of NY/NJ Baykeeper**.

"This legislation will provide much needed resources to restore fisheries and waterways across the region while enhancing public access, environmental justice, and climate resilience," said **Riverkeeper's Senior Manager of Government Affairs, Jeremy Cherson**. "Riverkeeper thanks Congressman Tonko for introducing this important bipartisan legislation to ensure our region benefits from a strong federal partnership to bolster existing efforts by state and local partners."

"Thank you, Congressman Tonko, for recognizing the importance of our shared waterways" said **Robert Pirani, Director of the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program**. "This legislation will help local communities address the challenges of climate change by improving water quality, enhancing fish and wildlife habitat, and creating public access across the estuary."

"Representative Tonko continues to demonstrate genuine leadership by authoring visionary legislation to help and protect and restore our precious water resources", said **Rich Innes, Senior Policy Director for the Association of National Estuary Programs**. "The New York-New Jersey Watershed Act is a major step towards revitalizing our communities and the natural resources they depend on."

The New York-New Jersey Watershed Protection Act is cosponsored by Representatives Jerrold Nadler [D-NY], Andy Kim [D-NJ], Jefferson Van Drew [R-NJ], Nydia Velazquez [D-NY], and Bonnie Watson Coleman [D-NJ].

The bill is supported by the following organizations: Scenic Hudson, Riverkeeper, Environmental Advocates of NY, the Schoharie River Center, NY/NJ Baykeeper, NYC Soil & Water Conservation District, National Wildlife Federation, Jersey City Parks Coalition, Environmental Defense Fund, National Parks Conservation Association, NYC Environmental Justice Alliance, NJ Audubon Society, Hackensack Riverkeeper, Waterfront Alliance, and Natural Areas Conservancy.

###