Clean Ocean Action ● Hackensack Riverkeeper ● Heal the Bay ● Natural Resources Defense Council
New York/New Jersey Baykeeper ● Surfer's Environmental Alliance ● Surfrider Foundation
American Littoral Society ● Alliance for the Great Lakes ● Assateague COASTKEEPER / Assateague Coastal Trust
Association of Clean Water Administrators ● Biscayne Bay Waterkeeper ● Cahaba Riverkeeper
California Coastkeeper Alliance ● California Water Impact Network ● Casco Baykeeper ● Chicago Wilderness
Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper ● Citizens Campaign for the Environment (NY&CT)
Citizens for Oceanfront Preservation ● Clean Water Network ● Clean Water Network of Florida
Coastal States Organization ● Deep South Region of National Garden Clubs ● Door County Public Health Department
Edison Wetlands Association ● Endangered Habitats League ● Environment New Jersey
Florida Federation of Garden Clubs ● Friends of Casco Bay ● Grand Riverkeeper ● Gulf Restoration Network
Haw Riverkeeper ● Haw River Assembly ● Hudson Riverkeeper ● Hoosier Environmental Council
Humboldt Baykeeper ● Indian Riverkeeper/Treasure Coast Environmental Defense Fund
Inland Empire Waterkeeper ● Lake County General Health District ● Louisiana Bayoukeeper
Massachusetts Baykeeper ● Missouri River Initiative/Izaak Walton League of America
Mobile Baykeeper ● New Jersey Sierra Club ● North Sound Baykeeper ● Ohio Environmental Council
Orange County Coastkeeper ● Pamlico-Tar River Foundation/Riverkeeper ● Puget Soundkeeper Alliance
San Francisco Baykeeper ● Santa Monica Baykeeper ● Save Barnegat Bay ● Save the Dunes
Seventh Generation Advisors ● Severn Riverkeeper ● Sludge Stoppers Task Force
South River Federation/Riverkeeper ● The Otter Project ● The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
Waterkeeper Alliance ● Wild New Jersey ● Yadkin Riverkeeper

RE: Please Restore FY2011 Funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's BEACH Program.

Dear Chairmen Reed and Simpson, and Ranking Members Murkowski and Moran;

On February 13, 2012, the administration released its proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2013 wherein it cuts – in its entirety – the funding to states authorized under the Clean Water Act by the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act. This program provides grants to states to **monitor water quality** at beaches and to **notify the public** when water quality exceeds applicable national standards. EPA's proposal to eliminate the BEACH Program from its FY 2013 budget will seriously endanger the health and safety of beachgoers and swimmers across the nation and, consequently, the vitality of our coastal, tourism-based economies.

According to the EPA Budget proposal, this program has either met its "goals or can be implemented through other federal or state efforts." Respectfully, we disagree.

This program's goal is to protect the health of recreational water users from bacteria, viruses, and other pathogens that make people sick. Because sources of pathogens continue to pollute the waters of the United States, this goal should not be considered – in the agency's own words – "accomplished." Furthermore, while some States are able to contribute at least partially to fund their beach water testing programs, the loss of their EPA BEACH grants will result in fewer beaches being tested, less often. Additionally, many States rely <u>entirely</u> on this program to fund their beach water quality monitoring programs, and the loss of this federal funding will shut down their beach programs, leaving public health unprotected.

In addition to removing support for monitoring and notification, this proposal creates the risk that states will stop following federal standards. Under the BEACH Act, states that accept federal funds must implement programs that meet certain minimum requirements. Dropping the funding opens the door to the very real likelihood that some states will either abandon these beachgoer protections altogether or will set standards so low that public health will be seriously endangered.

Americans rely on water quality monitoring and reporting to ensure that the water we swim, surf and play in is safe – especially for our children. With over 95,000 miles of U.S. coastlines, clean, safe beaches are vital to coastal tourism economies – coastal counties alone generate over 60% of the U.S. GDP. Coastal tourism and recreation, specifically, contributed over $61.5 Billion to the GDP from 1.9 million jobs at over 116,000 businesses in 2009.

With 24,091 beach closures and advisories in 2010 (the last year for which nationally-compiled data are available), now is not the time to stop beach monitoring. Although hard economic times do make spending choices critical, it is not a wise decision to eliminate this under-$10 million program that will consequently jeopardize the health of tens of millions of beach-goers and the $61.5 billion coastal tourism and recreation economy that they support.

The beachgoers, boaters, and recreational water users of the United States need functional federal *and* state recreational water quality programs. The EPA's plan to cut the Beaches Program is unacceptable and will immediately put the public's health at risk.

Therefore, the undersigned organizations ask that you restore EPA funding for the BEACH Act Program to the FY 2011 level of $9.9 million.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
Clean Ocean Action

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Bill Schultz
Riverkeeper
Hackensack Riverkeeper

Tim Dillingham
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American Littoral Society

Joel Brammeier
President & CEO
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Kathy Phillips
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Carolee Krieger
President and Executive Director
California Water Impact Network

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Baykeeper
Casco Baykeeper
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Michael William Mullen
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Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper

Adrienne Esposito
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Linda Young
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Haw River Assembly

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Hudson Riverkeeper

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Humboldt Baykeeper

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The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay

David Wheeler
Founder
Wild New Jersey

Dean Naujoks
Executive Director
Yadkin Riverkeeper

cc: Members of the Senate and House of Representatives Subcommittees on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.