



# Bipartisan Infrastructure Law National Estuary Program



## Background

Established by Congress in 1987, the [National Estuary Program](#) (NEP) is an EPA place-based program created to protect and restore the water quality and ecological integrity of estuaries of national significance. Currently, 28 estuaries are listed as NEPs, located along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts, and in Puerto Rico. Each NEP develops and implements Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMPs) that identify distinct water quality and living resource challenges and priorities based on input from local, city, state, federal, private, and non-profit stakeholders.

## BIL Funding Distribution

Through the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) (BIL), EPA Office of Water will distribute \$132 million in fiscal years 2022 through 2026 to expand and accelerate the implementation of projects in each program's CCMP. This funding will be evenly distributed among the NEPs, providing each with approximately \$900,000 in BIL funds annually. BIL funds will more than double the annual appropriation from recent years.

## Eligible Activities & Priorities

As with annual appropriations distributed to NEPs to implement Clean Water Act section 320, the BIL funds must implement each program's management conference- and EPA-approved CCMP and workplan.

In support of local priorities, NEP projects funded through the BIL should seek to:

- **Accelerate and more extensively implement CCMPs:** BIL provides an opportunity for NEPs to execute long-term projects, leverage key resources, and work with their management conferences and other key stakeholders to advance a wide range of projects identified in CCMPs.
- **Ensure that benefits reach disadvantaged communities:** The additional funding from the BIL will support NEPs in developing equity strategies and expanding upon ongoing efforts related to environmental justice. As a covered program under the Justice40

initiative, the NEP has a target of ensuring that at least 40% of the benefits and investments from the BIL funding flow to disadvantaged communities. NEPs should elevate environmental justice efforts, including, but not limited to:

- Expanding adaptive capacity of disadvantaged communities to be resilient to climate change;
  - Improving wildlife habitat, addressing water quality challenges or preventing or reducing nonpoint source pollution affecting disadvantaged communities;
  - Increasing disadvantaged communities' access to the benefits of the estuary, including all types of recreation; and
  - Expanding education and/or deepened engagement or representation of disadvantaged communities.
- **Build the adaptive capacity of ecosystems and communities:** NEPs have long been at the forefront of efforts to address climate change impacts in their watersheds, working with federal, state, and local partners, often using green infrastructure and nature-based solutions. NEPs should elevate climate efforts including, but not limited to:
    - Assessment and planning projects that involve climate change vulnerability assessments, community resilience and adaptation plans, or hazard mitigation plans;
    - Habitat restoration, water infrastructure, green infrastructure, stormwater management, and nonpoint source projects that prioritize innovative climate adaptation, hazard mitigation, and resilience solutions;
    - Projects focused on climate-related research, including those that measure, monitor, and increase carbon sequestration or climate adaptation; and
    - Projects focused on climate-related outreach and education.
  - **Leverage additional resources:** As NEPs select BIL projects, EPA expects programs to collaborate with other federal agencies and new partners and identify opportunities to leverage other EPA and federal agencies' funds (including other BIL funds), as well as state, local, and nongovernmental organization funds as available and appropriate.

## More Information

Read more about the National Estuary Program, including the new supplemental BIL implementation memorandum, at <https://www.epa.gov/nep>.

