

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 5589

To establish an Interagency Working Group on Coastal Blue Carbon, and
for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 13, 2020

Ms. BONAMICI (for herself, Mr. POSEY, Mr. BEYER, Mr. MAST, Mr. HUFFMAN, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. CASE, Mr. CASTEN of Illinois, and Ms. BROWNLEY of California) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Science, Space, and Technology, and House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish an Interagency Working Group on Coastal Blue
Carbon, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Blue Carbon for Our
5 Planet Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.**

2 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The National Science and
3 Technology Council Subcommittee on Ocean Science and
4 Technology shall establish an Interagency Working Group
5 on Coastal Blue Carbon.

6 (b) PURPOSES.—The Interagency Working Group on
7 Coastal Blue Carbon shall oversee the development of a
8 national map of coastal blue carbon ecosystems, establish
9 national coastal blue carbon ecosystem restoration prior-
10 ities, assess the biophysical, social, and economic impedi-
11 ments to coastal blue carbon ecosystem restoration, study
12 the effects of climate change, environmental, and human
13 stressors on sequestration rates, and preserve the con-
14 tinuity of coastal blue carbon data.

15 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—The Interagency Working Group
16 on Coastal Blue Carbon shall be comprised of senior rep-
17 resentatives from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
18 Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the
19 National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics
20 and Space Administration, the United States Geological
21 Survey, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the
22 National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the
23 Smithsonian Institution, the Army Corps of Engineers,
24 the Department of Agriculture, the Department of En-
25 ergy, the Department of Defense, the Department of

1 Transportation, and the Federal Emergency Management
2 Agency.

3 (d) CHAIR.—The Interagency Working Group shall
4 be chaired by the Administrator.

5 (e) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Interagency Working
6 Group shall—

7 (1) oversee the development, update, and main-
8 tenance of a national map and inventory of coastal
9 blue carbon ecosystems, including habitat types with
10 a regional focus in analysis that is usable for local
11 level protection planning and restoration;

12 (2) develop a strategic assessment of the bio-
13 physical, social, statutory, regulatory, and economic
14 impediments to protection and restoration of coastal
15 blue carbon ecosystems;

16 (3) develop a national strategy for foundational
17 science necessary to study, synthesize, and evaluate
18 the effects of climate change, environmental, and
19 human stressors on sequestration rates and capabili-
20 ties of coastal blue carbon ecosystems protection;

21 (4) establish national coastal blue carbon eco-
22 system protection and restoration priorities, includ-
23 ing an assessment of current Federal funding being
24 used for restoration efforts; and

(5) ensure the continuity, use, and interoperability of data assets through the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center's Coastal Carbon Data Clearinghouse.

(f) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Interagency Working Group shall provide to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives, and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report containing the following:

(A) A summary of federally funded coastal blue carbon ecosystem research, monitoring, preservation, and restoration activities, including the budget for each of these activities and describe the progress in advancing the national priorities established in section 4(a)(4)(A).

(B) An assessment of biophysical, social, and economic impediments to coastal blue carbon ecosystem restoration.

(2) STRATEGIC PLAN.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Interagency Work-
2 ing group shall create a strategic plan for Fed-
3 eral investments in basic research, development,
4 demonstration, long-term monitoring and stew-
5 ardship, and deployment of coastal blue carbon
6 ecosystem projects for the 5-year period begin-
7 ning at the start of the first fiscal year after
8 the date on which the budget assessment is sub-
9 mitted under paragraph (1). The plan shall in-
10 clude an assessment of the use of existing Fed-
11 eral programs to protect and preserve coastal
12 blue carbon ecosystems.

13 (B) TIMING.—The Interagency Working
14 Group shall—

15 (i) submit the strategic plan under
16 paragraph (A) to the Committee on
17 Science, Space, and Technology of the
18 House of Representatives, the Committee
19 on Natural Resources of the House of Rep-
20 resentatives, and the Committee on Com-
21 merce, Science, and Transportation of the
22 Senate on a date that is not later than one
23 year after the enactment of this Act and
24 not earlier than the date on which the re-

port under paragraph (1) is submitted to
such committees of Congress; and

(ii) submit a revised version of such
plan not less than quinquennially there-
after.

(C) FEDERAL REGISTER.—Not later than
90 days before the strategic plan under this
paragraph, or any revision thereof, is submitted
under subparagraph (B), the Interagency
Working Group shall publish such plan in the
Federal Register and provide an opportunity for
submission of public comments for a period of
not less than 60 days.

**SEC. 3. NATIONAL MAP OF COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECO-
SYSTEMS.**

(a) NATIONAL MAP.—The Interagency Working
Group shall—

(1) produce, update, and maintain a national
level map and inventory of coastal blue carbon eco-
systems, including—

(A) the types of habitats and species in the
ecosystem;

(B) the condition of such habitats includ-
ing whether a habitat is degraded, drained, eu-
trophic, or tidally restricted;

1 (C) the size of the ecosystem;

2 (D) the salinity boundaries;

3 (E) the tidal boundaries;

4 (F) an assessment of carbon sequestration
5 potential, methane production, and net green-
6 house gas reductions;

7 (G) an assessment of cobenefits of eco-
8 system and carbon sequestration;

9 (H) the potential for landward migration
10 as a result of sea level rise;

11 (I) any upstream restrictions detrimental
12 to the watershed process and conditions such as
13 dams, dikes, and levees;

14 (J) the conversion of coastal blue carbon
15 ecosystems to other land uses and the cause of
16 such conversion; and

17 (K) a depiction of the effects of climate
18 change, including sea level rise, environmental
19 stressors, and human stressors on the seques-
20 tration rate, carbon storage, and potential of
21 coastal blue carbon ecosystems; and

22 (2) in carrying out paragraph (1)—

23 (A) incorporate, to the extent possible, ex-
24 isting data collected through federally funded
25 research and by a Federal agency, State agen-

1 cy, local agency, Tribe, including data collected
2 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
3 Administration Coastal Change Analysis Pro-
4 gram, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National
5 Wetlands Inventory, United States Geological
6 Survey LandCarbon program, and Department
7 of Agriculture National Coastal Blue Carbon
8 Assessment; and

9 (B) engage regional technical experts in
10 order to accurately account for regional dif-
11 ferences in coastal blue carbon ecosystems.

12 (b) USE.—The Interagency Working Group shall use
13 the national map and inventory—

14 (1) to assess the carbon sequestration potential
15 of different coastal blue carbon habitats, and ac-
16 count for any regional differences;

17 (2) to assess and quantify emissions from de-
18 graded and destroyed coastal blue carbon eco-
19 systems;

20 (3) to develop regional assessments and to pro-
21 vide technical assistance to regional, State, Tribal,
22 and local government agencies, and regional infor-
23 mation coordination entities as defined in section
24 123030(6) of the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Ob-
25 servation System Act (33 U.S.C. 3602);

(4) to assess degraded coastal blue carbon ecosystems and their potential for restoration, including developing scenario modeling to identify vulnerable land areas where management, protection, and restoration efforts should be focused; and

(5) produce future predictions of coastal blue carbon ecosystems and carbon sequestration rates in the context of climate change, environmental stressors, and human stressors.

**SEC. 4. RESTORATION AND PROTECTIONS FOR EXISTING
COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEMS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall—

(1) lead the Interagency Working Group in implementing the strategic plan under section 2(e)(2);

(2) coordinate monitoring and research efforts among Federal agencies in cooperation with State, local, and Tribal government and international partners and nongovernmental organizations;

(3) assess the feasibility and potential of establishing a national goal of conserving at least 30 percent of the ocean and coastal blue carbon ecosystems within the territory of the United States by 2030, including the effects of climate change and sea level rise on such goal, and as appropriate setting targets

1 for restoration of degraded coastal blue carbon eco-
2 systems;

3 (4) in coordination with the Interagency Work-
4 ing Group and as informed by the report under sec-
5 tion 2(e) on current Federal expenditures on coastal
6 blue carbon ecosystem restoration, identify—

7 (A) national coastal blue carbon ecosystem
8 protection and restoration priorities that would
9 produce the highest rate of carbon sequestra-
10 tion and greatest ecosystem benefits such as
11 flood protection, soil and beach retention, ero-
12 sion reduction, biodiversity, water purification,
13 and nutrient cycling in the context of other en-
14 vironmental stressors and climate change; and

15 (B) ways to improve coordination and to
16 prevent unnecessary duplication of effort among
17 Federal agencies and departments with respect
18 to research on coastal blue carbon ecosystems
19 through existing and new coastal management
20 networks; and

21 (5) in coordination with State, local, and Tribal
22 governments and coastal stakeholders, develop inte-
23 grated pilot programs to restore degraded coastal
24 blue carbon ecosystems in accordance with sub-
25 section (b).

1 (b) INTEGRATED PILOT PROGRAMS TO RESTORE
2 DEGRADED COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEMS.—In
3 carrying out subsection (a)(5), the Administrator shall—

4 (1) establish integrated pilot programs that de-
5 velop best management practices, including design
6 criteria and performance functions for coastal blue
7 carbon ecosystem restoration, nature-based adapta-
8 tion strategies, restoration areas that intersect with
9 the built environments as green-gray infrastructure
10 projects, management practices for landward pro-
11 gression or migration of coastal blue carbon eco-
12 systems, and identify potential barriers to restora-
13 tion efforts;

14 (2) ensure that the pilot programs cover geo-
15 graphically and ecologically diverse locations with
16 significant ecological, economic, and social benefits,
17 such as flood protection, soil and beach retention,
18 erosion reduction, biodiversity, water purification,
19 and nutrient cycling to reduce hypoxic conditions,
20 and maximum potential for greenhouse gas emission
21 reduction;

22 (3) establish a procedure for reviewing applica-
23 tions for the pilot program;

24 (4) ensure, through consultation with the Inter-
25 agency Working Group, that the goals and metrics

1 for the pilot programs are communicated to the ap-
2 propriate State, Tribe, and local governments, and
3 to the general public; and

4 (5) coordinate with relevant Federal agencies
5 on the Interagency Working Group to prevent un-
6 necessary duplication of effort among Federal agen-
7 cies and departments with respect to restoration
8 programs.

9 **SEC. 5. COASTAL CARBON DATA CLEARINGHOUSE.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Smithso-
11 nian, in coordination with the Administrator and members
12 of the Interagency Working Group, shall provide for the
13 long-term stewardship of, and access to, data relating to
14 coastal blue carbon ecosystems and national mapping, by
15 supporting the maintenance of the Coastal Carbon Data
16 Clearinghouse.

17 (b) COASTAL CARBON DATA CLEARINGHOUSE DU-
18 TIES.—Acting through the Coastal Carbon Data Clearing-
19 house, the Secretary of the Smithsonian in coordination
20 with the Administrator and members of the Interagency
21 Working Group shall process, store, archive, provide ac-
22 cess to, and incorporate to the extent possible, all data
23 collected through federally funded research by a Federal
24 agency, State, local agency, Tribe, academic scientist, or
25 any other relevant entity.

1 (c) GLOBAL AND NATIONAL DATA ASSETS.—The
2 Secretary of the Smithsonian in coordination with the Ad-
3 ministrator and members of the Interagency Working
4 Group shall ensure that existing global and national data
5 assets are incorporated into the Coastal Carbon Data
6 Clearinghouse to the greatest extent possible.

7 (d) ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS, PROTOCOLS,
8 AND PROCEDURES.—The Secretary of the Smithsonian in
9 coordination with the Administrator and members of the
10 Interagency Working Group, shall establish standards,
11 protocols, and procedures for the processing, storing,
12 archiving, and providing access to data in the Coastal Car-
13 bon Data Clearinghouse and best practices for sharing
14 such data with State, local, and Tribal governments,
15 coastal stakeholders, non-Federal resource managers, and
16 academia. The Administrator shall work to disseminate
17 such data to the greatest extent practicable.

18 (e) DIGITAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES.—The Sec-
19 retary of the Smithsonian, in coordination with the Ad-
20 ministrator and members of the Interagency Working
21 Group, shall develop digital tools and resources to support
22 the public use of the Coastal Carbon Data Clearinghouse.

1 **SEC. 6. NAS ASSESSMENT OF CONTAINMENT OF CARBON**
2 **DIOXIDE IN DEEP SEAFLOOR ENVIRONMENT.**

3 Not later than 90 days after the date of the enact-
4 ment of this Act, the Administrator shall seek to enter
5 into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences
6 to conduct a comprehensive assessment on the long-term
7 effects of containment of carbon dioxide in a deep seafloor
8 environment on marine ecosystems and the integrity of ex-
9 isting storage technologies.

10 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

11 There are authorized to be appropriated to the Na-
12 tional Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to carry
13 out this Act \$15,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2021
14 through 2025.

15 **SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.**

16 In this Act:

17 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-
18 trator” means the Under Secretary of Commerce for
19 Oceans and Atmosphere in the Under Secretary’s
20 capacity as the Administrator of the National Oce-
21 anic and Atmospheric Administration.

22 (2) COASTAL BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEM.—The
23 term “coastal blue carbon ecosystem” refers to vege-
24 tated coastal habitats including mangroves, tidal
25 marshes, seagrasses, kelp forests, and other tidal or
26 salt-water wetlands, and their ability to sequester

1 carbon from the atmosphere, accumulate it in bio-
2 mass for years to decades, and store it in soils for
3 centuries to millennia. Coastal blue carbon eco-
4 systems include both autochthonous carbon and
5 allochthonous carbon.

6 (3) STATE.—The term “State” means each
7 State of the United States, the District of Columbia,
8 the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American
9 Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern
10 Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands of the United
11 States, and any other territory or possession of the
12 United States.

○