

The Honorable _____,

SAVE OUR RESERVE

Weeks Bay Reserve, founded by the community 30 years ago, is vital in supporting a local healthy economy. It is a place that thrives on marshes and estuaries that provide things we love about the coast like fishing, bird watching, eating the seafood and exploring the wonders of nature. Please protect these special places; protect funding that provides so much for so many; protect the funds that provide this special place to visit, learn, and explore Alabama's coast.

This week I heard of budget cuts that could impact the reserves around the nation, like the one here in Alabama at Weeks Bay. This cannot be allowed to happen. If we lose or have cuts to the reserve program we lose:

- Coastal lands and estuaries that protect from flooding, keep water clean, sustain and create jobs, support fish and wildlife, and offer outdoor education;
- Programs at Weeks Bay Reserve attracting more than 50,000 students, educators, and people coming to visit over the past ten years;
- Decision makers from municipalities and businesses over the past year that number in the hundreds and having thousands of contact hours benefitting from reserve-based science and technical expertise on a variety of issues essential to coastal communities;
- Monitoring stations for water quality, weather and local changes in habitat that assist to best manage coastal resources providing a sentinel site to alert for degradation; and
- Education of teachers and students at Weeks Bay having reached over 10,000 K-12 students over the past decade.

Our community depends on Weeks Bay Reserve for providing to students, researchers, coastal managers and visitors from far and wide a place to learn about the coastal processes of estuaries, where rivers meet the sea. Estuaries like Weeks Bay are vital areas being the nursery grounds for the seafood we enjoy, fishing grounds and birding rookeries that contribute directly to the economy, and places that remind us all of our cultural heritage. We need Weeks Bay Reserve and we need your support to protect and preserve the funds that operate the Visitor Center and programs that impact so many at the local, state and regional levels here along the Gulf coast.

Weeks Bay Reserve is a place in our state that has real value in improving the economic well-being of our community. You must ensure the CZMA 315 funds continue to support the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) at the current level of \$23 million for the system. This will provide funds to OUR Reserve here in Alabama to continue this great work.

Thank you for your attention and help.

Sincerely,