



## Dannel P. Malloy

GOVERNOR  
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

April 24, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I write to express my strong support for designating the Long Island Sound and its watershed as a critical conservation area under the Department's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) and ask that a portion of the \$1.3 billion Congress has provided the program over the next five years be targeted for the Sound and its watershed.

Long Island Sound is a crown jewel of Connecticut's natural resources and part of what makes Connecticut such a special place. The Sound is a unique urban estuary that brings a rare combination of environmental significance, recreational value, and beauty to a large and diverse population that lives close by. Long Island Sound is also a remarkable economic engine for our region – with studies placing its impact at more than \$8.9 billion per year. The watershed contains some of the most important farmland in the country with over 650,000 acres in the Connecticut River Watershed alone. LIS is also home to a vibrant aquaculture industry with over 70,000 acres of shellfish beds under cultivation resulting in \$30 million in farm gate sales and over 300 jobs just in Connecticut alone.

Over the last three decades, Connecticut has made a significant commitment to protecting and restoring the Sound. Millions of dollars have been invested in communities throughout its watershed to address pollution concerns and protect the tidal wetlands along its shore. Long Island Sound ranks 4th out of the 28 national estuaries for leveraging federal dollars. For every \$1 in federal spending there is \$98 in non-federal spending. Formal designation as a critical conservation area would significantly amplify our ongoing conservation activities associated with Long Island Sound and our watershed partners.

I commend Congress for creating the RCPP as part of the 2014 Farm Bill and your commitment to fostering restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales. The benefits to the people and resources of the Long Island Sound watershed, stretching as it does through six states to Quebec, would be substantial.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dannel P. Malloy". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "M".

Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor