

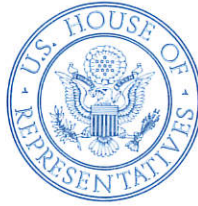
CARLOS CURBELO
26TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

EDUCATION AND THE
WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-0926

March 23, 2016

The Honorable John Culberson, Chairman
Chair, House Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
2372 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Honda, Ranking Member
House Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
2372 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Honda:

I write to request the following Committee Report Language to be included in the FY17 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill:

"The bill provides an increase of \$11,000,000 for the Habitat Conservation and Restoration Program. The Committee directs the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to dedicate the increased funding to scale up field and land-based coral nurseries and monitoring program as recommended by the Endangered Species Act Recovery Plan for Elkhorn and Staghorn Coral."

In addition, I request the program funding level of **\$69,390,000** for the NOAA – ORF Account for "Habitat Conservation and Restoration". This is \$11 million over the Administration's FY17 request.

The National Marine Fisheries Service issued an "Endangered Species Act Recovery Plan for Elkhorn Coral and Staghorn Coral" in March, 2015. The Recovery Plan includes several recommendations "that the available information indicates are necessary for the conservation and survival" Elkhorn and Staghorn corals. Elkhorn and staghorn corals were once the most abundant and important species on Atlantic/Caribbean coral reefs in terms of building reef structure. Both Elkhorn and Staghorn corals underwent precipitous declines in abundance throughout their ranges in the 1970s and 1980s.

Coral reef ecosystems are important for their numerous ecological, aesthetic, economic, and cultural functions. Coral reefs provide vital habitat and nurseries for fish and other marine life; protection from storms and waves; and livelihoods for tourism-dependent coastal communities. Without healthy coral reefs, all ocean marine life and the communities that depend on them will suffer.

I believe that Congress and the Administration should provide funding to implement the recommendations of the Recovery Plan. If you have any questions, please contact Adam Wolf in my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carlos Curbelo".

Carlos Curbelo (FL-26)