



REGION 4

ATLANTA, GA 30303

Ms. Jennifer Hecker
Executive Director
Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership
1050 Loveland Boulevard, Unit D
Port Charlotte, Florida 33980

Dear Ms. Hecker:

Pursuant to Section 320 of the Clean Water Act, each National Estuary Program (NEP) is required to develop and maintain a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). A CCMP is a long-term planning document that recommends priority actions to protect and restore the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the estuary. The CCMP serves to guide decisions regarding a wide range of environmental protection issues, including restoration and maintenance of water quality, a balanced indigenous population of shellfish, fish, and wildlife, and to assure that the designated uses of the estuary are protected.

The CCMP is a living document, and EPA recommends that individual NEPs review and assess their CCMP and associated documents (monitoring, habitat, finance, and community engagement plans) on a regular basis to determine whether a revision or update is needed to keep the CCMP relevant. The Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership (CHNEP), in cooperation with your Management Conference and with support from EPA, has determined that an update was the appropriate mechanism to modify the 2019 CHNEP CCMP.

The required elements of a CCMP Update as outlined in the 2021-2024 National Estuary Program Funding Guidance include:

- Descriptions of any revised/new goals, objectives, and action plans, and indicate whether they are replacements for or enhancements of former plans;
- Entities that will serve as lead implementers;
- A timeline and key milestones for completion;
- Where the action will take place and/or the natural resources affected;
- Potential costs and sources of funding;
- Performance measures (quantitative/environmental results wherever possible); and
- A cross walk description of how all new actions/updated actions compare with related original actions and what the basis was for change.

The EPA has reviewed the final, Management Conference approved, 2025 CHNEP CCMP submitted on November 19, 2024. We have confirmed that the updated CCMP contains all required elements and meets the intent of the Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act of 2021 that amended Section 320 of the Clean Water Act. Therefore, we approve the 2025 CCMP for the Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership. We acknowledge that CHNEP will review the CCMP's associated documents in 2025 and will submit any necessary modifications for approval. Thank you for the attention you and your staff have put into your CCMP and please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kathlene Butler
Director
Water Division

cc: Wade Lehmann, EPA Region 4
Rachel Hart, EPA Region 4
Noemi Mercado, EPA Headquarters
Cindy Barger, EPA Headquarters