

For Immediate Release

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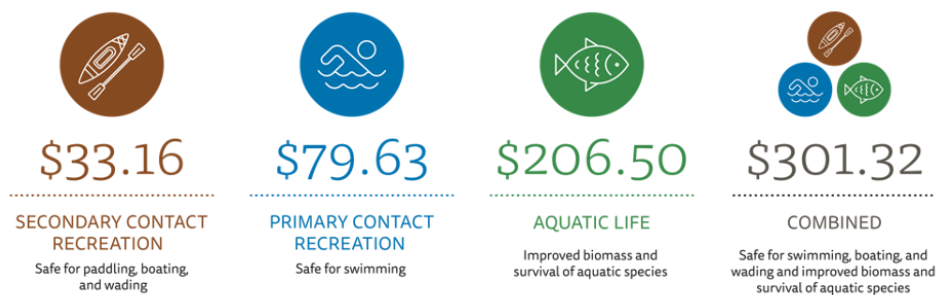
## First-Ever Economic Study of Clean Water in the New York - New Jersey Harbor Estuary Reveals Improved Water Quality Creates Significant Economic Value

(September 12, 2023 New York) Today, the New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) and NEIWPCC, released the first-ever attempt to calculate the economic value of clean water in the New York-New Jersey Harbor Estuary. The report, which was completed by ICF and NEIWPCC and funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, suggests that even relatively modest improvements to water quality can yield significant economic benefits for local households. What’s more, improving water quality to the extent where it could support recreational activities like swimming and paddling and aquatic species is valued at \$1.4 billion dollars annually by local households.

“This study shows that investing in water quality and a healthy ecosystem is beneficial for the well-being of millions of people who live, work, and enjoy the outdoors in this region,” said **EPA Regional Administrator Lisa F. Garcia**. “The study finds that improving water quality to the extent where it could support recreation and aquatic species is worth up to \$1.4 billion dollars annually to local households. The returns on these investments are tangible and make a real difference.”

ICF’s economists evaluated four different scenarios for improved water quality: one in which the water would be suitable for boating, paddling, and wading safely in the water (secondary contact recreation); one in which the water would be suitable for swimming safely in the water (primary contact recreation); one in which the water would allow for healthy fish and ecosystems (aquatic life); and one that includes all of the above. The team then estimated the value of those improvements to households in 30 counties that are covered by the Harbor & Estuary Program. The results show that even relatively modest water quality improvements, such as those that would achieve water safe for paddling and boating, are valued by households, implicitly accounting for benefits like increased property values, decreased health risks from water contact, and improved appearance and smell.

Annual Household Value of Water Quality Improvements



Estimated benefits for water quality improvements under all water quality scenarios measured in millions.

Prior to this study, no economic valuation studies have been conducted for the waters in the Harbor Estuary. The lack of economic literature for the Harbor Estuary region to date makes this economic analysis valuable for raising awareness of the tremendous value that clean water in the Harbor Estuary provides. This study can also be used as a steppingstone for additional work to identify specific components of the economic value related to water quality improvements in the Harbor Estuary – for example related to specific types of activities or as realized by particular groups.

“This work provides a real and substantial indication of the high value a clean and healthy estuary has for New York and New Jersey residents” said **Robert Pirani, Director of the New York – New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program at the Hudson River Foundation**. “We anticipate this important effort will help spur additional research on the many other economic benefits and ecosystem services that flow from our waterways.”

“NEIWPC is happy to have supported HEP in the development of this first ever estimate of the economic value that clean water brings to the watershed. The high value that households place on clean water in the region plays into our goals to preserve and advance water quality across the Northeast,” said **Susan J. Sullivan, Executive Director of NEIWPC**.

The Hudson River Foundation and HEP will host a presentation and discussion on September 21, 2023, featuring the study’s authors, Jessica Balukas of ICF and Robert Johnston of Clark University. They will discuss the methodology of this study and how this work can be used to inspire other economic valuations of water and environmental improvement in the estuary. The seminar is virtual and free to attend. Please [register here](#).

To learn more about this study you can see the [entire report here](#), as well as an [executive summary](#) and [data graphics](#).

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### **About the New York/New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program**

Created by EPA at the request of New York and New Jersey, HEP is a coalition of government, utility, nonprofit, and university stakeholders. As its host, HRF is proud to manage the collaborative, provide the backbone staff, and work with these many partners to guide management of the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary, one of 28 federally recognized estuaries across the US.

### **About ICF**

ICF is a global consulting services company, but we are not your typical consultants. We help clients navigate change and better prepare for the future. ICF helps governments better serve their citizens and meet new challenges at every level. Our policy and regulatory experts work to boost state, local and national governments by transforming citizen needs into public service successes. We also help our clients create thriving communities by delivering strategies that increase program impact. From developing sustainable and resilient societies to providing technical expertise that strengthens institutions, we meet market challenges that fulfill people’s needs.