

October 3, 2011

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
United States House of Representatives  
1203 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ed Markey  
United States House of Representatives  
2108 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey:

The modern American economy depends on our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes for a wealth of jobs and resources, even as our nation faces a rising tide of competition for those ocean resources. From energy production to commercial fishing to shipping and transport, millions of American jobs depend on access to healthy marine environment. For example, in New England alone, ocean and coastal resources contribute over 360,000 jobs and over \$8 billion directly in wages to the economy every year. A healthy ocean provides living-wage employment, direct economic benefits, recreational value, wildlife habitat, cultural identity and indirect economic services like protection from natural disasters.

But increasing levels of uncoordinated development could threaten our ability to responsibly use, protect and enjoy our valuable resources. Wind and other energy facilities, commercial fishermen, anglers and divers, ship masters and military training operations are all vying to use the same waters -- along with whales, birds, sea turtles and other important wildlife. Dozens of federal agencies assert jurisdiction over ocean uses without coordinating with each other. Information about how the ocean is being used is incomplete, hard to find and inconsistent. Without smart ocean-use planning, we end up with haphazard and uncoordinated development — an ocean traffic jam. The U.S. is missing opportunities to maximize what we get out of the ocean while minimizing the threats to its health.

Our nation can do better, and fixing those shortcomings is the ultimate goal of the National Ocean Policy that President Obama established through an Executive Order 13547 in July of 2010. Building on decades of work by two national ocean commissions, Congress, multiple state initiatives and a year of public dialogue and input from stakeholders around the nation, the Executive Order is the product of in-depth policy findings and recommendations spanning both Republican and Democratic administrations. At its core, the National Ocean Policy is designed to fix our nation's current haphazard and uncoordinated ocean governance systems and create a regionally-based system that works for the betterment of both our ocean economy and ocean environment.

Uncoordinated competition for ocean resources is a problem that has been long-recognized by numerous states and regions, many of which are already attempting to address these issues and are planning for their future. For example, in New England, the mid-Atlantic, the Pacific

Northwest and parts of the southeast, states and regional collaborations are already collecting the best data available, creating maps of ocean and coastal uses and providing forums for citizens and ocean users to have a voice in what happens with these valuable shared resources.

But states cannot fix our nation's ocean management system on their own. Given the inherent role of the federal government in federal ocean waters, the federal government must build on existing regional efforts to help guide ocean development in sensible ways. We believe that the National Ocean Policy achieves this goal using a smart, balanced approach. States and regions across the country are anxious to move forward using the tools that the National Ocean Policy provides. The National Ocean Policy is a major step in the right direction, and one that deserves your support and encouragement.

A healthy ocean is everyone's business. The much needed implementation of the National Ocean Policy is critical for the future of our oceans, coasts and communities. We urge you to support the National Ocean Policy.

Very truly yours,

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