

TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE THOMAS H. ALLEN
BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES FISHERIES,
WILDLIFE, AND OCEANS SUBCOMMITTEE

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My home state of Maine is a coastal state, and is deeply connected to the Ocean. Many of my constituents depend directly on the Oceans for their livelihoods through ocean-related industries such as commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, tourism, transportation, and other industries.

However, all Americans, from Maine to Oklahoma to Alaska, are connected to the Oceans in many additional ways.

1. We depend on the Oceans for directly for food, transportation, and protection.
2. The Oceans are closely connected to weather, and the effects of oceanographic fluctuations are felt from the farmlands in our interior to the coastal plains.
3. We need to understand oceanographic patterns, in order to understand, predict, and protect ourselves from weather patterns, ocean-related natural disasters, and climate change.
4. The U.S. Ocean Economy is valued at over \$115 billion per year, and supports over 28 million jobs.
5. Oceans are culturally important to Americans in ways that cannot be easily quantified.

There is a critical need to effectively coordinate use of the Oceans by all the diverse interest groups that depend on them, from fishermen to oil and gas companies to those in the tourism industry. At the same time, it is critical that we keep our oceans healthy and protect the marine ecosystems upon which we all depend.

This bill, H.R. 21, is an important first step. It will:

1. Establish a National Ocean Policy and standards for management of U.S. Coasts and Oceans. It is critical that we have a comprehensive management plan for this valuable resource.
2. Promote ecosystem-based, regional ocean governance. Every region has specific economic and ecological needs, and management must be responsive to those needs. This regional structure will be collaborative and facilitate communication among federal, state, and local management entities.
3. Enhance national oceans governance structure by strengthening important existing functions and facilitating communication at the national level. This includes codification of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
4. Establish an Oceans and Great Lakes Conservation Trust Fund. This fiscally responsible step will help to fund local, state, and federal efforts to develop and implement this Act.

I believe that this bill will be good for my home state of Maine. For example, it will:

1. Sanction, lend credibility, and provide structure and consistent funding for the Gulf of Maine Council
2. Help us to accomplish State goals that require a regional response
3. Make the federal government more responsive to and focused on regional needs

The bottom line is that cooperation and coordination are essential in order for us to protect our ocean resources, and also for us to profit from them. Our own economic well-being and the health of our oceans depend on our ability to successfully share those resources. H.R. 21 is the first step toward securing, for present and future generations, the full range of benefits of healthy marine ecosystems.