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To the House Natural Resources Committee
Full Committee Oversight Hearing:
"Offshore Drilling: Environmental And Commercial Perspectives"
Wednesday, February 11th at 10 a.m.

Thank you Chairman Rahall, Ranking Member Hastings and the Committee both for holding this series of hearings and for inviting me to be here today.

It is a great pleasure and honor to be here to testify about the critical importance of responsibly managing our fragile and increasingly important marine resources. As many of you know I have grown up around the ocean and marine conservation has been part of my family's legacy for generations. I am the CEO of EarthEcho International, where we work to empower individuals to take action to restore and protect our oceans and also serve on the Board of Trustees of Ocean Conservancy, the country's oldest and largest ocean non-profit harnessing over 35 years of policy and scientific expertise to anticipate ecological threats to the ocean.

Ever since the invention of the aqualung, or scuba tank as it is referred to today, by my grandfather, there has been an explosion of ocean exploration. Indeed, I remember growing up with tales about my grandfather's adventures; about when he took his first breath underwater and descended onto the reefs in the South of France. I also was told of how devastated the changes he saw in his lifetime on those very reefs which are all but dead today.

I spent many hours of my own youth there, as well, diving off the coast of France as a young boy. I can no longer stand to go back. I find the barren and desolate underwater landscape so terrible. It can break your heart when you see the beauty that was once there – that was captured by my grandfather on film – and know that it's all gone now.

I think that there is an irony that the last 50 years have seen not only the greatest amount of exploration of the oceans, but also the greatest amount of exploitation and destruction of them and it continues apace. What is so critical about the Outer Continental Shelf is that almost all of the non-fisheries based, not to mention much of the fisheries exploitation occurs there. From oil and gas drilling, to renewable ocean energy development and even aquaculture and traditional fishing, the OCS is under increasing pressure every year.

We face great hardship in the country at this time and the ocean and coastal communities are a critical part of our economy –Over 50% of our GDP is generated in coastal counties where approximately 50% of our population resides, with 'blue jobs' and marine industries contributing greatly. I am not advocating that we do not develop the ocean. But if we are to realize the full benefit of our oceans, if they are to continue to provide us with opportunities for economic development, it must be done in a way that is planned and that takes into consideration

the health of the environment or we will merely reap short term gains at the expense of our children.

Specifically, speaking on behalf of Ocean Conservancy, we seek three things:

First, Congress must act where it failed to act last fall: most preferably by fully reinstating the moratorium on new oil leasing in the OCS. While I strongly maintain that the reinstatement of the moratorium is critical to the health of the ocean, if there is to be new drilling we must at the very least legislate to ensure the process of new drill siting and the conditions applied to exploration and production minimize their impacts. Science should guide OCS oil and gas development, and where the science is not adequate, it is absolutely crucial that studies should be conducted before leasing occurs. Contrary to popular belief, not all ocean floors are created equal. There are myriad different types of habitat from deep coral reefs to rich rocky terrain to relatively barren mud but the current process doesn't sufficiently consider these variables. Similarly, some regions are especially vulnerable and Congress must ensure they are protected. In the Arctic, for example, we lack the baseline scientific information necessary to make informed decisions, and there is no capacity to handle accidents and oil spills in its ice-filled seas. There are cheaper, faster, safer alternatives to new offshore oil drilling to meet our energy needs and end our dependency on foreign oil. We must vigorously enhance our efforts to develop ocean renewable energy. From wind...solar...wave...tidal and even Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion there is an endless potential to responsibly develop new clean sources of energy. To give you an idea of the power of the oceans, on an annual basis, the amount of solar energy absorbed by the oceans is equivalent to at least 4000 times the amount presently consumed by humans.

The second specific recommendation is for a comprehensive plan to put order in the ocean and stop the anarchy of fractionalized development. In late 20th century America, suburbs crept across the landscape in ever-widening maze of highways and strip malls. The term "urban sprawl" entered the vernacular as a way to describe our penchant for building our cities outward with little forethought as to what we built where, and why. In the ocean the situation is similar, only worse. As we gaze out over the great blue expanse of the ocean, the peace and tranquility that we often witness is deceiving. Wind farms compete with recreation. Recreation competes with shipping. Shipping competes with conservation and so on down the line until the pattern reflects a tangle of uses that are neither economically efficient nor sustainable. It's clear that we need order in the ocean just as surely as we need it on land. We need comprehensive ocean planning – with conservation as a central deciding factor-- so that the many competing uses work together in a way that is sustainable for our shared ocean future.

I am sure that everyone can agree that having no laws, no zoning and no plan for the development of a city would lead to chaos and economic disaster, so too with the ocean. Indeed, it is not only critical for the environment that we plan, but also for industry so that they can anticipate more accurately the outcome of permitting and development.

And the third specific recommendation is the creation of an ocean investment fund. This would set aside a small portion of the revenue generated off these uses to pay for activities and projects that maintain and restore marine ecosystem health, such as this comprehensive environmentally

based spatial planning of the outer continental shelf. It is ironic that OCS mineral receipts have been devoted towards many causes, but never the preservation of our oceans. There is an appallingly low amount of investment in ocean exploration and conservation. In fact, we spend 1000 times more on space exploration than ocean exploration. This fund would be vital in the effort to push forward the veil of mystery that obscures much of the ocean and help enormously in further refinement of both management and conservation of our dwindling ocean resources.

Just as I said earlier that the last 50 yrs have seen the greatest amount of damage to our oceans it is the next 50 that will be the most critical. The next 50, these are our years, these are the years where we will decide the fate of the world and we have no time to lose. We must have the courage and conviction and foresight to make the decisions now that will set our course forever.

Let me close my time with you by sharing some final words my grandfather once wrote, and I'm quoting:

"We can find happiness in protecting the world around us not only because we cherish it for its awesome beauty, power, and mystery, but because we cherish our fellow humans, those who live today and those who will live tomorrow, living beings who, like ourselves, will increasingly depend on the environment for happiness and even for life itself."

Thank you for giving me this opportunity. And on behalf of EarthEcho International as well as the half a million members and supporters of Ocean Conservancy, thank you for allowing their voices to be heard today as well.