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TESTIMONY OF

THE HONORABLE SAM FARR
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BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

OCTOBER 4, 2011

Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Markey, and to the rest of my colleagues that sit on this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the President's National Ocean Policy. This issue is of particular importance to me, as I have spent much of my career fighting to improve ocean governance and management. I think many of my colleagues here today would agree that the oceans play a critical role in our national economy. Commercial fishing, for example, contributes $70 billion annually to our nation's economy and is an industry that impacts businesses in every community across America. From the fisherman who catches our dinner, to the truck driver who transports the seafood, to the mom and pop seafood restaurant owners, all of these people depend on healthy oceans for their livelihoods.

The terrifying fact is, however, that our ocean economy is at risk. Just this summer, a growing 83-mile dead zone in the Chesapeake Bay was described by scientists as the worst in history. Simply put, if we continue on our current destructive path, oyster and shellfish populations in Chesapeake Bay will be doomed, placing further economic hardship on shellfish harvesters and fishermen.

Our inability to deal with the serious pressures facing our oceans stems from the way we manage our oceans, which historically has been a bureaucratic mess where we manage our resources in what amounts to policy "silos." Over 140 Federal laws and dozens of agencies have jurisdiction over ocean resources. This problem was recognized by both the Bush Administration's U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission. These two separate Commissions found the Federal government's management of our oceans to be fragmented, uncoordinated, and in dire need of improvement. Following consultation with hundreds of stakeholders and scientists, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy published its final report which called for a comprehensive and coordinated national ocean policy.

To fulfill the Bush Commission's recommendations, President Obama established America's first National Ocean Policy to reduce duplicative efforts and waste and

increase the effectiveness and coordination of ocean management. The National Ocean Policy emphasizes the importance of oceans for jobs, food, energy development, transportation, trade, and international security with the goal of sustaining both our ocean economy and our marine resources.

The National Ocean Policy has laid out nine priority objectives in order to address the most pressing challenges facing our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. These priority objectives include: enhancing water quality, addressing changing conditions in the Arctic, implementing ecosystem-based management, improving Federal coordination with State, tribal, local, and regional efforts, developing adaptation strategies for ocean acidification, and utilizing a data collection and analyzing tool called Coastal Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP). Through the nine priority objectives, tangible benefits will be achieved by all ocean users.

Unfortunately, however, there has been a great deal of misconception regarding CMSP, which is just one of the nine priority objectives. This misconception has wrongly tainted the understanding of the National Ocean Policy at its most basic level. Some claim that CMSP is a new, mandatory program that will impose job-killing regulations on ocean industries and restrict ocean uses and activities – but this is simply untrue. The National Ocean Policy explicitly states that CMSP shall "Support sustainable, safe, secure, efficient, and productive uses of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes, including those that contribute to the economy, commerce, recreation, conservation, homeland and national security, human health, safety, and welfare…and…Provide for and maintain public access to the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes." Ultimately, the National Ocean Policy is about balance and will ensure long-term sustainability for our ocean economy, ocean jobs, and ocean environment.

The Administration has made very clear that the National Ocean Policy is a non-regulatory, bottom-up approach. CMSP is an adaptive, ecosystem-based tool that has been used for decades to analyze current and anticipated uses of our coastal and marine resources. Under the National Ocean Policy, each state has the right to decide whether they would like to conduct CMSP off of their coasts, and decisions about the offshore environment will be made by local governments in coordination with tribal, State, and regional entities. It is important to point out that 22 of the 35 coastal States explicitly recognize the need for CMSP in their Coastal Zone Management plans, including Washington, Texas, Georgia, Virginia, and South Carolina. These states recognize that improved decision-making across multiple levels of government will translate to saving both the government and permit applicants time and money by reducing duplication of effort.

Additionally, CMSP will produce upfront benefits to the industry and agencies, helping create jobs in emerging industries by providing more certainty for offshore projects. CMSP in the State of Massachusetts, for example, allowed for coordinated planning between Federal and State agencies and stakeholders in the planning of offshore wind energy development. Through a collaborative effort, the State was able to acquire and analyze existing data and information regarding fisheries, transportation, navigation,

infrastructure, sediment, recreation and cultural services, and wind. Using this information, the State was able to determine the area most suitable for offshore wind energy, while taking into account areas identified as important to the fishing industry. This example demonstrates how CSMP can successfully reduce conflict, provide certainty to the industry, and also result in a streamlined decision-making process leading to substantial ecological, social, and economic benefits.

I agree that implementation of the National Ocean Policy must be a transparent, open, and stakeholder driven process. So far, the Administration has made an effort to ensure that stakeholders have a voice through public workshops and comment periods, but these efforts need to be expanded as we move forward so the actions and issues most important to the American people can be brought to the forefront. The National Policy will ultimately provide States, Tribes and Local governments an unprecedented forum, through the newly established Governance Coordinating Committee which represents all parts of the U.S. with the purpose of coordinating on an ongoing basis with the Federal government. Congress, however, has not recognized that this stakeholder engagement comes at a cost, and if we want a transparent process, we must provide the necessary funding.

The National Ocean Policy is a common-sense, bipartisan idea that has spanned both Republican and Democratic Administrations. If we want to ensure that fishing, recreation, and other uses are available to future generations, we must act now to change the status quo. The National Ocean Policy is about good governance, not restricted use, and it is necessary both for the long term health of our national economy and our ocean environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today, and I hope that we can work together to ensure that our vibrant coastal economies thrive and local communities have a voice in ocean governance.