

**Opening Statement  
The Honorable Edward J. Markey  
Committee on Natural Resources  
Tuesday, October 4, 2011**

**Oversight Hearing on *“The President’s New National Ocean Policy - A Plan for Further Restrictions on Ocean, Coastal and Inland Activities.”***

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The letters, P-L-A-N may be a “four-letter” word, but they are not a dirty word, as the Republican Majority would have us believe. The last time I checked, plans were helpful things. We have an emergency evacuation plan for this building. We have a plan for the airspace above us that says no one can fly too close to the Capitol. We make long-term investment plans so we can enjoy a comfortable retirement.

Without plans, we’d be at a loss day-to-day and long-term. We’d struggle when decisive action was needed. We’d cause unnecessary conflicts that could be avoided.

Just like other plans, comprehensive ocean planning would allow everyone with an interest in our coasts and oceans to participate in a transparent, decision-making process to determine how to best utilize an increasingly busy, productive and important national resource. This would increase predictability and certainty for existing and new users of these areas and improve ocean health.

Opposing ocean planning is like opposing air traffic control. You can do it but it will cause a mess or lead to dire consequences.

It is time for our nation to have an ocean plan. The United States and territories have exclusive economic jurisdiction over approximately 4.5 million square miles of ocean. These areas are a vital part of the U.S. economy, supporting tens of millions of jobs and contributing trillions of dollars annually to our national economy. Our coastal counties, which make up only 18% of the country’s land area, are home to 108.3 million people or 36% of our nation’s population, and these numbers are steadily increasing.

These growing uses within our ocean and coastal areas are placing significant pressures on these natural resources and planning will help ensure that they are healthy and available for future generations.

Last year, the President established the National Ocean Policy to do just that – begin planning to protect, maintain, and restore our ocean and coastal resources. Instead of supporting a plan for our oceans, the Republican Majority continues to pursue scare tactics, claiming that the policy creates additional regulations and kills American jobs.

Just the opposite is true. By harmonizing the existing regulations that govern our coasts and oceans, this policy will allow developments to move ahead more quickly while creating jobs and improving the health of the oceans.

This is not just a theoretical debate. We know ocean planning works. Look at what has happened in my home state of Massachusetts. In 2008, Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the landmark Massachusetts Oceans Act to develop the first-in-the-nation ocean management plan designed to balance commercial and recreational use with wildlife and habitat protection in state waters. The plan uses hard data and web-based mapping to make sure we're not creating conflict on the high seas.

For example, Massachusetts worked with stakeholders to refine the area considered for offshore wind energy development to take into account certain areas identified as important to the fishing industry – while still making wind energy developers happy because plenty of space was still going to be available to them for future offshore energy development. An ocean plan enables businesses to catch the wind or catch the fish, without getting caught up in unnecessary conflict.

An ocean plan will also allow military operations and maritime shipping to both occur off the coast of Virginia, so the armed forces can practice landing tanks and companies can still land their tankers.

An ocean plan means we can lay down fiber optic cable from Cape Cod to Martha's Vineyard without affecting fish habitat, so customers can surf the worldwide web without affecting the web of life below the surf.

The National Ocean Policy, like the Massachusetts Ocean Management Plan, is a plan that we should all support. The ocean plan promotes commerce, while encouraging comity, and promotes the economy while protecting ecosystems.