

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Edward J. Markey**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Wednesday, October 26, 2011**

**Second 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.

Earlier this month, we held the first hearing on the National Ocean Policy. At it, the Republican Majority claimed there is a “chicken and egg” problem with ocean planning policy.

The Majority says that the President is overreaching by issuing his executive order on the National Ocean Policy and that comprehensive ocean planning requires Congressional authorization.

However, when presented with ocean planning legislation in the last two Congresses, the Republicans raised enormous opposition.

So for Republicans it’s not about which comes first on ocean planning -- Congress or the White House. It’s about never wanting the chicken to cross the road.

To keep our oceans and coasts viable for fisheries, military training, energy development, tourism and conservation, we need ocean planning.

I commend the President for using his authority under existing laws to ensure the health of our oceans given the opposition of Republicans to Congressional action.

We are not living in the 1600s, when “freedom of the seas” was the guiding principle for the world’s oceans. In fact, this is not even the 1980s, when President Reagan used his executive powers to zone our oceans by proclaiming a 12 nautical mile territorial sea and a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone for the United States.

This is 2011 and the blue frontier has become an increasingly crowded space. Fishing grounds, shipping lanes, Navy training ranges, offshore energy production, fish and wildlife habitats, and other uses are increasingly in competition.

The National Ocean Policy recognizes these conflicts and provides tools to harmonize the existing regulations that govern our coasts and oceans. These tools will allow developments to move ahead more quickly while creating jobs and improving the health of the oceans.

Scare tactics describing far-fetched “what if” scenarios are counterproductive. By trying to lower the boom on ocean planning, Republicans will instead run our coastal economies aground.

In New England alone, coastal communities support more than 360,000 jobs and earn more than \$8 billion in wages related to the oceans. Massachusetts is a national leader in comprehensive ocean planning with completion of the Massachusetts Ocean Plan. Rhode Island has developed a Special Area Management Plan and the Northeast Regional Ocean Council is starting the development of the nation’s first regional ocean use plan.

But we are not alone. Increasingly other regions, including on the West Coast, also see the need to address uncoordinated development that threatens our ability to efficiently use our ocean natural resources now and pass them on to future generations.

The National Ocean Policy represents decades of bipartisan work from two oceans commissions and includes the input of multiple agencies, states, tribes and thousands of stakeholders. It is an adaptive process to coordinate and capitalize on existing relationships, entities, and programs that protect and utilize our ocean resources. This committee has heard from numerous ocean stakeholders over the years about the need for an open and inclusive process to establish objectives for maintaining the economic and environmental health of our oceans and coasts. The National Ocean Policy provides the means to perform this critical task.

I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses today about how the National Ocean Policy can help lift the anchor on our coastal communities and chart a course for healthy and vibrant oceans and coasts.