

Opening Statement
The Honorable Edward J. Markey
Committee on Natural Resources
Wednesday, March 7, 2012

“The Council on Environmental Quality’s FY 2013 Funding Request and the Effects on NEPA, National Ocean Policy and Other Federal Environmental Policy Initiatives.”

Since its creation 42 years ago, CEQ has played an integral role in helping presidents of both parties protect America’s environment while growing our economy.

As one of those presidents said:

"The price of economic growth need not, and will not be, deterioration in the quality of our lives and our surroundings."

I don’t often quote Richard Nixon, but he was right in that instance. And he was right to sign the National Environmental Policy Act in 1970.

In addition to creating CEQ, the National Environmental Policy Act required that the federal government assess the impact of federal actions on the environment and gave the public an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Through NEPA, Congress ensured that Federal agencies could no longer make decisions unilaterally.

CEQ serves a critical function in coordinating actions involving multiple agencies and providing uniform guidance and pilot programs to share cost-reducing and time-saving strategies between agencies.

From protecting the Colorado River and drinking water supplies from pollution coming from uranium mill waste in Moab, Utah to anticipating the risk of wildfire to the nuclear research labs at Los Alamos, NEPA and CEQ have a history of helping to find solutions to complex environmental challenges.

That history continues today with CEQ’s leadership in the creation and implementation of the President’s National Ocean Policy. It provides, at long last, a unifying framework to better coordinate and integrate over 100 different existing laws, policies, and regulations affecting the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Our ocean and coastal 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. The growing utilization of our ocean and coastal areas is placing significant pressures on these natural resources and the National Ocean Policy will help protect, maintain, and restore our ocean and coastal resources.

CEQ is also helping the Federal government save money and reduce pollution by increasing energy efficiency and reducing the use of fossil fuels. In January 2010, President

Obama announced that the Federal government would reduce its emissions of global warming pollution by 28 percent from 2008 levels by 2020. This will create cumulative savings of 8 to 11 billion dollars in avoided energy costs. CEQ is helping maximize taxpayers' dollars into the government's work, not waste.

In leading the Interagency Climate Change Adaptation Task Force, CEQ is also helping the Federal government respond to and plan for the impacts of climate change. The United States is already experiencing climate change including:

- more frequent and extreme rainfall,
- longer wildfire seasons,
- reduced snowpack,
- extreme heat events,
- increasing ocean temperatures and
- rising sea levels.

Last year showed us the economic consequences of extreme weather as we suffered a record 14 weather disasters that caused 1 billion dollars or more in damage. CEQ's vision of a "resilient, healthy and prosperous Nation in the face of a changing climate" is one we should all share.

A year after President Nixon signed the National Environmental Protection Act into law, another iconic American environmental text was published.

Dr. Seuss captured the concerns of the time about "smogulous smoke" and "water so smeary". In the Lorax, he gave us someone to speak for the trees. Now, I will take a moment to speak for CEQ.

What will we do if we lose CEQ?

Just listen a moment, I will tell you.

We'd find a lonely place, that's in a disgrace.

Where rivers burn and fish can't swim,

Where the air is thick and the sunlight dim,

It would be a sad place that time forgot!

Unless someone like YOU funds CEQ,

Nothing is going to get better. It's not.

I urge this Committee to support the critical work that CEQ does to ensure harmony between our environment and our economy.