

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

May 3, 2012

Representative Doc Hastings
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings:

I am writing to respectfully request a hearing on the effects of climate change on US natural resource interests in the Arctic. A number of recent studies have documented the potential for conflict between the United States and other countries over management of strategically, economically, and environmentally important resources that will become accessible as conditions in the Arctic continue to change.

Most recently, a report released May 1, 2012 by the non-partisan Center for Climate and Energy Solutions found that “the trend toward seasonally open waters is driving increased interest and investment in oil and gas exploration, shipping, and fishing in the Arctic,” and that “In response to these changes, many of the Arctic states have begun to re-examine their military capabilities to operate in the Arctic region.” The report’s authors examined recent national security activities by Arctic states, and stressed that conflict could become the norm in the absence of a stronger framework for balancing competition and cooperation.

On March 10, 2011, the National Research Council issued a report sponsored by the US Department of the Navy that recommended: “to protect US interests, US naval forces need to fund a strong, consistent effort to increase Arctic operations,” and that US naval leaders should continue to stress to Congress the value and operational benefits of ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.” The NRC report cites rising natural resource demands as a key driver of potential conflict.

These and other studies build upon the groundbreaking 2007 report *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*, authored by the CNA Corporation and its Military Advisory Board of former flag and general officers. The CNA report expressed grave concern about the Arctic in particular, stating that “a warming Arctic holds great implications for military operations. The

highest levels of planetary warming observed to date have occurred in the Arctic, and projections show the high northern latitudes warming more than any other part of the earth over the coming century. The Arctic, often considered to be the proverbial ‘canary’ in the earth climate system, is showing clear signs of stress.”

With the well-documented and rapid retreat of sea ice, the potential for increased shipping activity, expanded access to fisheries resources, and increased exploration for oil, gas, and other minerals make Arctic policy of utmost importance, even when we consider the US in a vacuum. The impending competition for these assets with other Arctic countries necessitates swift action to put in place a set of national policies to address the impact of climate change on this region. A lack of preparedness could limit our ability to claim, utilize, and conserve Arctic natural resources.

Thank you in advance for considering my request for a hearing on the effects of climate change on US natural resource interests in the Arctic. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Matt Strickler of my staff at 5-6065.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey

Ranking Member

House Committee on Natural Resources