

November 20, 2013

Dear WRDA / WRRDA Conferees:

We are citizens, businesses, and groups concerned with the future of our ocean and coastal resources. We urge you to use your position in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) conference to protect our oceans and coasts by supporting the National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO) and opposing any effort to undermine the National Ocean Policy.

From energy production to commercial fishing to shipping and transport, our modern American economy and millions of American jobs depend on our oceans and coasts. For example, in 2010, maritime economic activities supported 2.7 million jobs and \$258 billion in GDP.¹ A significant amount of this economic strength relies on healthy ocean resources. In the fisheries sector alone, ocean and coastal resources contribute to the employment of over 1.6 million people.² A healthy ocean provides employment, direct economic benefits, recreation, wildlife habitat, cultural identity, and indirect economic services like protection from natural disaster.

The WRDA conference will consider two provisions that significantly impact the ocean and coasts and the economies that rely on them. We support the Senate-passed National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO), which would help improve ocean health and maximize the economic benefits to our nation. We oppose the House-passed Flores rider, which would place damaging restrictions on the use of common-sense ocean management tools like smart ocean planning and ecosystem-based management. To maximize the benefits of a healthy ocean and vibrant economy, **we urge you to include the NEO provision and strike the Flores rider from WRDA.**

Following the recommendations of the bi-partisan U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy appointed by President George W. Bush, NEO (Title XII to S. 601) would authorize grants to state, regional, and tribal entities, as well as nonprofit organizations and academic institutions. The endowment would support efforts to conserve and restore ocean resources as well as develop the baseline science, monitoring, and observation data to facilitate sustainable uses that will create jobs and support coastal economies. To enable this critical work, we urge you to support inclusion of the NEO provision in a final WRDA bill.

Conversely, we urge you to strike the Flores rider (Section 146 to H.R. 3080). Section 146 seeks to prohibit the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a key coastal and ocean management agency, from coordinating with coastal states, other federal agencies, and the public as they engage in smart ocean planning. Banning coordination between the Corps and these entities is misguided. Smart ocean planning is a management tool currently being used by several states, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Washington, and Oregon. This rider infringes on the rights of states to continue using ocean planning as a tool in coordination with the Army Corps. Imposing such an arbitrary restriction harms states, the Army Corps, and the ocean and coastal economy.

A healthy ocean that supports a strong economy is a non-partisan choice. We urge you to support the National Endowment for the Oceans and oppose the Flores rider in conference.

Sincerely,

¹ National Ocean Economic Program. 2010. [oceanomics.org]

² NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Science and Technology. 2011. Fisheries Economics of the U.S.

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National Audubon Society
National Boating Federation
National Estuarine Research Reserve
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National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
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