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On June 19, President Donald Trump signed Executive Order (E.O.) 13840, “Ocean Policy to Advance Economic, Security, and Environmental Interests of the United States,” revoking and replacing much of the previous administration’s ocean policy. E.O. 13840 seeks to improve interagency coordination on ocean-related matters, public access to data, and engagement with marine industries, the science and technology community, and other stakeholders. On signing this order, President Trump became the third consecutive president to issue an executive order calling for the coordinated and comprehensive management of coastal and ocean resources.

Specifically, the new ocean policy calls for federal departments and agencies to coordinate their ocean-related activities to ensure effective management of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes waters. The order highlights the need to ensure that federal regulations and management decisions do not prevent productive and sustainable use of those resources. It also directs agencies to continue promoting the lawful use of the ocean, facilitate the economic growth of coastal communities and ocean industries, and modernize the acquisition, distribution, and use of the best available ocean-related science and knowledge. In order to accomplish these goals, E.O. 13840 establishes a new interagency Ocean Policy Committee to provide advice regarding ocean-related policy matters.

A group of seven House Democrats quickly objected to the order signed by President Trump, claiming that his decision to revoke the existing National Ocean Policy (NOP) is “short-sighted” and will overturn years of critical ocean planning and policy. Based on recommendations from the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force, the NOP was implemented in 2010 through President Barack Obama’s Executive Order 13547, “Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes,” which focused on ensuring the protection, maintenance, and restoration of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources, enhancing our capacity to respond to climate change, and coordinating with our national security and foreign policy interests. In a letter to House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop (R-UT-1), led by Ranking Member Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ-3), the group of Democrats requested an oversight hearing to examine the implications of President Trump’s new policy.

Sources: E&E News; The Hill; Government Publishing Office; U.S. House, Committee on Natural Resources; White House, Office of the Press Secretary.
