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Home > Legislative Hearing on H.R. 553, H.R. 1308, H.R. 1399, H.R. 1425, H.R. 1491, and H.R. 2219

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## Legislative Hearing on H.R. 553, H.R. 1308, H.R. 1399, H.R. 1425, H.R. 1491, and H.R. 2219

*Witnesses:*

### **PANEL I:**

**The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici**

Representative, 1st District of Oregon

### **PANEL II:**

**Rear Admiral Gerd Glang**

Director, Office of Coast Survey, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

**Guy Norman**

Regional Director, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

**Nick Gayeski**

Aquatic Ecologist, Wild Fish Conservancy Northwest

**Edward Kelly**

Executive Director, Maritime Association of the Port of NY & NJ

**Richard McDonald**

President, Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS)

**Dr. Lynne Talley**

Professor, Scripps Institution of Oceanography

*Committee Members Present:*

John Fleming (R-LA), Chairman

Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU), Acting Ranking Member

Alan Lowenthal, (D-CA)

Joe Garcia (D-FL)

Don Young (R-AK)

Doc Hastings (R-WA)

On June 13, 2013 the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs held a legislative hearing on a number of oceans bills, including H.R. 553, H.R. 1308, H.R. 1399, H.R. 1425, H.R. 1491, and H.R. 2219.

Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Ranking Member of the House Science, Space and Technology Subcommittee on Environment, testified before the subcommittee on H.R. 1425 and 1491, which she authored.

Witness testimony from the second panel focused on supporting H.R. 1308, the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act, which would amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to reduce predation on endangered Columbia River salmon, and H.R. 1399 and 2219.

Chairman John Fleming (R-LA) introduced each bill in his opening remarks, briefly summarizing their various contents. Acting Ranking Member Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU), in her opening statement, spoke out in support of each bill, save H.R. 553, which would designate the exclusive economic zone of the United States as the "Ronald Wilson Reagan Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States".

H.R. 1425, the Marine Debris Emergency Act of 2013, and H.R. 1491 both focus on funds for marine debris cleanup in the wake of severe marine debris events, such as tsunamis or earthquakes. H.R. 1425 would amend the current Marine Debris Act to expedite the NOAA grant process for acquiring funds to clean-up marine debris in the wake of a severe marine debris event.

H.R. 1491 focuses specifically on the clean-up of debris along U.S. coastlines that resulted from the magnitude-9.0 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami which struck the coast of Japan in March 2011. The Japanese government provided \$5 million to NOAA through its Marine Debris Program to aid in cleanup efforts of marine debris that has washed ashore. So far, NOAA has given \$50,000 each to Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington, for cleanup efforts that occurred after December 2012, but has been unable to reimburse states for cleanup efforts between March 2011 and December 2012 due to its statutory grant authority. H.R. 1491 would allow, but not require, NOAA to use the funds to fully reimburse the states.

During her testimony, Congresswoman Bonamici highlighted the cost of marine debris cleanup on “already struggling” state and local governments. In particular, Bonamici cited when a 66-foot dock – debris from the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami – washed ashore in Oregon, costing the state \$80,000 in cleanup costs. Bonamici explained that H.R. 1491 would provide an expedited process for states to apply for NOAA grants to assist in the cost of marine debris cleanup, which would ease the strain on already tight state and local budgets and “focus limited federal resources for marine debris cleanup in areas where they are desperately needed.” In addition, she stated that the amount of 2011 tsunami debris currently still in the ocean would cost an estimated \$1.5 million in cleanup, and that H.R. 1491 would enable the states to more efficiently deal with debris if and when it washes ashore. H.R. 1399, the Hydrographic Services Improvement Amendments Act of 2013, and H.R. 2219 both focus on data gathering in oceanic and coastal waters. H.R. 1399 calls for a reauthorization of the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998 (HSIS) and H.R. 2219 calls for a reauthorization of the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009 (ICOOS). In his testimony, Kelly stated that these bills would ensure the “safe, sustainable use of our coastal waterways” which are “increasingly vital to our way of life.”

Questions from the members mostly focused on public and private cooperation for the programs outlined in H.R. 1399 and 2219, and came from Representatives Don Young (R-AK) and Alan Lowenthal (D-CA). Rear Admiral Glang said that NOAA was doing an excellent job with current administration, stating that they had four hydrographic ships and more than 200 employees dedicated to surveying. McDonald stated that there definitely needs to be more public and private partnership, and that the private sector should not be competing with the federal government in these areas, but rather working together. Congressman Young voiced his displeasure with the seeming refusal of NOAA to make any efforts towards partnership with private firms.

Opening statements and witness testimony, as well as an archived video of the hearing, are available on the Committee on Natural Resources website.

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