

Chair Grijalva Opening Statement  
Natural Resources Committee Legislative Hearing  
*“Ocean Climate Action: Solutions to the Climate Crisis”*  
November 17, 2020

Thank you to all of the Members of Congress and witnesses for joining us today to have a conversation about my bill, the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act. At over 300 pages long, this bill includes a number of provisions – many of which are bipartisan – to address the very serious problem of climate change.

As the incoming Biden Administration is going through its transition process, we must lay the groundwork to address climate change with the speed this crisis demands.

Turning to the legislation, the idea here is simple. A healthy ocean can help us fight the climate crisis.

Our ocean has absorbed over one third of our carbon emissions and 90 percent of the excess heat we have generated. This has consequences which has resulted in ocean acidification, sea level rise, shifting fish stocks, coral reef die-offs and more.

The ocean and atmosphere are closely connected, which is good news for us. Scientists have found that 21 percent of the carbon equation can be solved globally through the ocean.

But climate proposals have ignored the ocean for far too long.

That’s why we’ve put forward the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act, a bill that provides a roadmap for ocean and coastal climate resilience and curbs greenhouse gases.

Since this bill is the first of its kind, we continue to expect and welcome feedback. I look forward to working with all of you to improve this legislation.

The bill develops a plan to protect 30 percent of the ocean by 2030, which is good for everybody – a new study finds that expanding existing global marine protected areas by just 5% can improve future fisheries catch by at least 20%.

The bill also prepares our fisheries and blue economy for climate change, improves coastal zone management, strengthens marine mammal conservation, and confronts ocean acidification and harmful algal blooms.

It improves coastal resilience and specifically promotes resilience and justice for U.S. Territories, Indigenous People, and communities of color.

Crucially, the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act captures and reduces carbon dioxide by creating a pathway forward for renewable offshore energy and enhances

natural carbon capture and storage in ocean ecosystems like seagrass beds, kelp forests, and mangroves, a concept known as “Blue Carbon”.

The way I look at it, we are in a reciprocal relationship with nature.

You reap what you sow: greedy polluters have harmed our planet for decades, and now we are all facing the consequences.

But with solutions like this bill and other proposals to confront climate change, we can and will do better.

Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member for his opening statement.