

The Honorable John Fleming
Chairman
House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee
Opening Statement
Oversight Hearing on
“The Implications of President Obama’s National Ocean Policy”
May 17, 2016

Today’s hearing is about shining some sunlight on what has become a non-transparent Administration agenda aimed at curtailing multiple-use access in our oceans and lands.

The Administration’s so-called National Ocean Policy is not new to this Committee, as this is the sixth oversight hearing on this subject. What’s also not new is that the Administration continues to hide its actions on this questionable policy.

Many questions remain unanswered. For example:

- Under what authority is the President acting to implement this policy?
- Who is funding activities of the National Ocean Council and the Regional Planning Bodies?
- How will this affect federal – and state – fisheries management and offshore energy development - two industries that are vital to Louisiana’s economy?
- How far inland does this policy actually reach?

The first Regional Planning Body will release its plan for the northeastern U.S. later this month. Yet, scarce information has been provided. It will undoubtedly become a blueprint for other regional plans that really won’t be regional but will be straight out of Soviet style command-and-control casting since these bodies consist primarily of federal agencies.

The Administration was invited to answer our concerns and questions related to this hearing. Indeed, the other side of the aisle has insisted that we invite more federal agencies to our hearings. In this case, inviting the Director of the National Ocean Council was warranted. So, we did just that. If you follow the television screen, Majority staff for this Committee sent an email to Ms. Beth Kerttula (*kerr-too-la*) on May 5th, followed by a formal invitation on May 9th, and then with another email on May 11th. There were also a number of phone calls made to Ms. Kerttula’s office and cell phones in between this correspondence. There was no response from the Administration until late last week. At the end of the day, the Administration is a no-

show and I have little doubt that is by design. Their absence is telling and indicative of this whole effort: share as little information as possible even though their stated goal is quote “federal coordination and transparency” unquote.

We will hear today that Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning – or what some call “federal zoning” -- is necessary to combat competing uses among traditional marine industries, recreational activity, and offshore development. That’s a false choice. If you go out in the Gulf of Mexico -- and a witness here with us today can attest to this -- some of our best fishing takes place right off of our off-shore oil rigs. These different uses aren’t conflicting, but can be complementary of each other in some cases.

This Administration is aloof of what’s going on in the Gulf, continually ignores the boundaries of the law and does whatever it pleases until checked by the judicial branch like last week with Obamacare or is held accountable through congressional actions.

We will hear from those potentially impacted today. From the Eastern Seaboard, to the Gulf Coast to the inland farming communities of the West, we will listen to strong concerns about these vague policies being implemented by unaccountable bureaucrats behind the scenes. It’s unfortunate – but not surprising – that the Administration couldn’t be here to listen to these legitimate concerns. I look forward to hearing from you all here today.

This hearing will be the first of a number of actions this Subcommittee will take to hold the Administration’s feet to the fire on this gross executive overreach aimed at curtailing multiple-use access to our ocean resources.