

Opening Statement
The Honorable Jared Huffman
Subcommittee on Water, Power, and Oceans
Thursday, November 2, 2017
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 221, H.R. 1176, S.140

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am glad to see bipartisan support for the bills that we are discussing today. We don't always agree on legislation in this subcommittee, but there are ways that we can and should work together. I'd like to thank my colleagues for making that happen.

I'll start with H.R. 1176, the Keep America's Waterfronts Working Act. This bipartisan bill provides much needed federal support for working waterfronts across the nation, from Maine to my district in California. Working waterfronts are essential to coastal businesses and communities. Commercial fishermen need a place to land their catch, recreational anglers rely on harbors and marinas to reach their favorite fishing spots, and aquaculture, boat building, and tourism businesses all depend on safe harbors and access to coastal waters.

These and other coastal and ocean industries employ over 2 million Americans and contribute over \$200 billion to our economy each year. This bill would establish the first federal program to protect and improve the working waterfronts that are integral to our coastal economies. It would also protect public access, promote community participation, and bring together federal, state, and local partners to collaborate on waterfront revitalization efforts.

Productive working waterfronts in my district demonstrate the importance of planning and cooperation. These coastal communities are able to balance economic development, the environment, and public access and recreation because everyone shares and depends on a healthy,

well-managed coast. We have some of the best shellfish growers in Humboldt and Tomales Bays, where there are also kayakers, surfers, and bird watchers among expansive seagrass beds and estuarine ecosystems. Fishing vessels docked at harbors from Bodega Bay to Trinidad are neighbors to local restaurants serving fresh seafood and residents fishing from a nearby pier. It is exactly these kinds of balanced and diverse uses that make waterfronts the heart of many coastal communities in my district and beyond.

In summary, H.R. 1176 recognizes the historic, social, and economic importance of waterfronts and provides the support that states need to maintain them. Coastal communities have weathered their share of tough conditions, but federal investment ensures that they remain resilient, especially as changing oceans and increasing development threaten businesses. The Coastal Zone Management Act has helped states work with the federal government to best manage their coastal assets for the past few decades, and it is fitting that this bill expands the scope of this Act to protect and promote working waterfronts as part of effective coastal zone management.

I also look forward to discussing H.R. 221, the Hydrographic Services Improvement Amendments Act. This bill reauthorizes funding for vital navigation and safety services of NOAA's Office of Coast Survey, which maintains over a thousand charts and publications used by federal and state agencies, private organizations, and the public. It is no small feat to do this for our nation's 95,000 miles of shoreline and 3.4 million square nautical miles of water.

I'd like to thank my colleague Chairman Young for introducing this bill. It is critical that we ensure federal capacity for hydrographic surveys, mapping, and charting. NOAA vessels and data support a wide range of activities and inform decisions with significant economic, environmental, and safety impacts.

As we face rapidly changing ocean conditions, hydrographic services will only become more important. This is particularly true in the Arctic, where we will eventually see ice-free summers. It is not a matter of if, but when and how soon. With that comes an entirely new seascape for maritime commerce and transport, defense, and natural resources. This bill allocates specific amounts to Arctic surveys, but I am concerned that the current language may constrain NOAA's capacity in the region, and I hope to discuss this further today.

Lastly, we'll hear about S.140. This bill makes a small change to a previously-approved water rights settlement in order to allow the White Mountain Apache Tribe in Arizona to complete work on a rural water system. Specifically, the bill clarifies that funding Congress has already authorized for "water-related economic development" projects can be used to cover possible construction cost overruns associated with the Tribe's main water project, which will provide drinking water supplies for Tribal members once completed. I'm glad we're discussing this bill today, and I welcome future discussions on this Subcommittee about Indian water rights settlements and the serious problem of drinking water shortages in Indian country.

With that, I'd like to thank all of our witness for being here today. I look forward to a productive discussion.

I yield back.