

### **Rep. Jared Huffman Opening Statement**

This is our subcommittee's second legislative hearing this Congress. It is also the second with all bipartisan bills. We have done this very intentionally, as I promised we would, because we want to set a tone of teamwork and collaboration. Today we're going to again discuss bills that provide common-sense, science-based solutions for issues facing our coastal communities. Despite the zero-sum partisanship that has seeped into the culture of this institution, I hope today's hearing reminds us that we really don't have to fight about everything; we can choose to just take an honest look at the facts for the sake of our constituents and coastal economies around the country, and pursue the best ideas regardless of party labels.

Several of these bills reauthorize highly popular and successful programs. That includes the National Sea Grant College Program, which operates in coastal and Great Lakes states, as well as Guam and Puerto Rico. I introduced a bill to reauthorize and amend this broadly supported program -- which unfortunately the Trump administration has proposed to eliminate in their budget for Fiscal Year 2020.

Another bill would reauthorize the Integrated Ocean Observing System, IOOS (*"eye-ooos"*), a federal partnership led by NOAA, whose mission is to produce and integrate high quality ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes data to meet the Nation's safety, economic, and stewardship needs. This is especially critical in the face of climate change and rising sea levels.

Mr. Case's H.R. 2406, which I am proud to cosponsor with Mr. Young of Alaska, would reauthorize and amend the NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps Act to improve recruitment and retention in NOAA's cadre of highly specialized uniformed officers who operate NOAA's fleet of research vessels and aircraft.

These reauthorizations are long overdue and much-needed, as our witnesses will attest.

The Digital Coast Act, introduced by Mr. Dutch Ruppersberger, would authorize NOAA to establish a digital information program to integrate coastal data with decision-support tools, so that our local, state, and federal partners have the best possible tools to manage our coasts in the face of flooding, sea level rise, and coastal erosion. Much of this work is already being done, but we need to codify this to ensure it's being done the right way and to provide NOAA with the resources and tools to do it efficiently.

The Great Lakes Fishery Research Authorization Act, introduced by Mr. Mike Quigley of Illinois, would authorize the U.S. Geological Survey to provide critical scientific information to support sustainable bi-national fisheries management in the Great Lakes. This is a trust responsibility that the federal government must provide to tribes that hold hunting, fishing, and gathering rights on ceded lands in the United States.

Continuing the theme of responsible and sustainable management of our fisheries and protected species, we will also discuss the Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act. California has the last remaining large-scale driftnet fishery left in the United States. These nets are banned on the high seas, as other nations – including Russia – find these nets too harmful to wildlife. Driftnets do not discriminate the types of sea life they catch, resulting in tremendous bycatch and the death of thousands of animals including whales, dolphins, sea turtles, birds, and unmarketable fish that are discarded.

Given the amount of harmful bycatch, the State of California has banned this method of fishing and handed management of the fishery to the federal government because it has the tools to set and enforce limits on the bycatch of protected species. NOAA Fisheries proposed rulemaking to do just that, but the Trump Administration withdrew this rulemaking against California's wishes. There are far safer, more economical ways to catch swordfish than this and it is time to modernize this fishery. This bill would phase out large scale driftnets and help fishermen adopt alternative practices to minimize bycatch, and the Senate companion bill has already been reported favorably by the Senate Commerce Committee. Like many of the other bills we are considering today, the Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act was also reported favorably by the Senate Commerce Committee last congress.

Moving on, Mr. Young introduced the Young Fishermen's Development Act. This bill would help encourage young people's participation in commercial fishing, as well as provide technical training for new and emerging fishing technologies, so we can ensure that our fisheries and working waterfronts will thrive for generations to come.

Mr. Young also introduced the American Fisheries Advisory Committee Act, which would establish a committee to assist in the awarding of fisheries research and development grants, giving voices to recreational and commercial fishing communities when directing the future of fisheries research.

Finally, H.R. 417, introduced by Mr. Soto of Florida, would ban the importation or interstate sale of lionfish, which are an invasive species originally from the South Pacific and Indian Oceans and brought to the United States in the aquarium trade. They are devastating our tropical Atlantic reef ecosystems.

These are good bills we're considering today, not just because they have bipartisan support, but because they will produce broad benefits that are especially important for coastal communities and the Great Lakes region. By passing these bills, we can help make our coasts safer, more productive, and sustainable for a thriving blue economy.

With that, I'm looking forward to hearing from our expert witnesses, and I'll turn it over to the Ranking Member for his remarks.