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July 21, 2026

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harriet Hageman
Chair
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Val Hoyle
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Members of the Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries,

I want to thank Chairman Westerman and Chair Hageman and Ranking Member Huffman and Ranking Member Hoyle for considering the Whale CHARTS Act in this hearing, and I want to thank the many fishing, boating, and conservation groups that worked with my office to get the Whale CHARTS Act to this point. It's not often we're able to develop a whale conservation bill that has the breadth of support that this bill does.

In California, working with fishers, boaters, and the maritime industry, we've made great progress over the last 30 years to bring Blue Whales, Humpback Whales, and Fin Whales back from the brink. And our new ropeless gear regulations for the Dungeness Crab fishery are showing promise to reduce entanglement events.

All too often, though, we're relying on partial and fragmentary data for estimating whale populations and for understanding whale behavior, habitat, and mortality. Most of this data currently comes from vessel and aerial surveys. These traditional survey techniques are effective, but they're costly and time-consuming. That means it's expensive and difficult to close our current knowledge gaps.

My bill strives to address those gaps by directing NOAA to use advanced technologies, like drones, eDNA, and satellite imagery, to significantly improve the quantity and quality of data we gather on whale populations, whale behavior, and whale habitat, and to use that data to improve whale tracking systems and maps of whale habitat that mariners use. Better data means better decision-making and better outcomes.

My bill would also help develop advanced technologies for detecting and tracking whales, to help prevent collisions with ships. That means better outcomes for both whales and mariners.

These new technologies won't entirely replace traditional vessel and aerial surveys, but they can augment and improve the data we get from these surveys. I also want to be clear that there is no single answer. These new technologies are tools in the toolkit that can help reduce collisions. They are not a replacement for vessel speed restrictions. Vessel speed limits will still be crucial on both the East and West Coasts for protecting threatened and endangered populations.

I know some of my colleagues on this Committee may disagree with that, but I think we can agree that advanced survey, detection, and tracking technologies have the potential to significantly improve conservation outcomes for whales, while also making daily life easier for mariners and recreational boaters. That's why I'm so proud of this bill, because we've been able to come together and find common ground.

So, I want to thank the Committee for considering my legislation, and I look forward to working with the Committee to advance this bill to the House floor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink that reads "Doris Matsui". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doris" and last name "Matsui" clearly distinguishable.

DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress