



COMMITTEE ON

SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Stephanie Bice

Environment Subcommittee Hearing – “Defining a National ‘Oceanshot’: Accelerating Ocean and Great Lakes Science and Technology

June 7, 2021

Thank you for holding this hearing, Chairwoman Sherrill. I want to thank our witnesses for appearing before the subcommittee and sharing their perspectives.

Public awareness around ocean science is at a peak right now. Tomorrow is World Oceans Day, this week is Capitol Hill Ocean Week, June is National Ocean month, and this year we kickoff the start of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The time seems prime for our subcommittee to capitalize off the current heightened public attention our oceans and Great Lakes are receiving.

Representing the landlocked state of Oklahoma, I admit I’m not much of an expert when it comes to ocean science and technology, but that’s why I’m excited to be here today to learn from our fascinating panelists. Given that the ocean economy produces almost \$300 billion in goods and services, and employs more than 3 million people, it’s impossible to deny there is a national trickledown effect to areas that are landlocked.

While I personally don’t have much experience with ocean science, I do have firsthand experience with extreme weather. I was fascinated to learn how the moist air that blows off the Gulf of Mexico is part of what makes Oklahoma tornado alley. As we hear our witnesses today discuss their ideas on what could make a great ‘Oceanshot’ for our nation to pursue, I understand that any such effort could result in improved weather forecasting and understanding of tornado formation. That is something that could save lives, money, and property in Oklahoma and other states that experience severe weather.

Just as the ‘Moonshot’ led to many new and unexpected technology innovations, a well-coordinated “Oceanshot” could spur breakthroughs in technology that benefit more than just marine science. The potential benefits could touch all aspects of society such as the economy, national security, public health, and more. Whether its advanced sonar or automated drones, the technologies being used for ocean exploration can in turn offer benefits to industries like offshore oil production and wind energy generation. Creating

silos where technology is only developed for one purpose within the government is the definition of wasting taxpayer resources.

Furthermore, I'd like to discuss how the federal government can be a better partner with private industry, academia, non-profits, and philanthropists to accelerate the translation of basic science into applied research and ultimately a marketable product. Just like the Department of Energy's basic research led to the fracking revolution by the natural gas industry, I hope that NOAA is striving to conduct research that will benefit the United States' economy for decades to come.

Lastly, I want to focus on how we can market the pursuit of STEM education to the next generation of scientists and explorers. We've heard in this committee before the challenges our nation is facing at remaining competitive and retaining talented young individuals in prominent science roles, especially women and minorities, and those from rural communities. We know that any 'Oceanshot' we try to achieve cannot be successful if we do not invest in the talent of tomorrow. We need to first make this field appealing and attractive to the brightest minds our country has to offer and then have the pieces in place to provide them a top tier education on the topic.

Ocean science is a wide-ranging topic touching on everything from energy, critical minerals, living resources, and ecosystems. I look forward to hearing how the ocean science and technology enterprise can solve complex challenges and strengthen our Nation and its communities.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.