



HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
CLIMATE CRISIS

Opening Statement of Chair Kathy Castor
Hearing on “Building Climate-Resilient Coastal Communities:
Perspectives from Oregon’s State, Local, and Tribal Partners”
August 3, 2022

As prepared for delivery

I’d like to start by thanking our colleague and climate champion, Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, for welcoming us to Oregon. Once again the region has had to deal with a deadly heatwave, reminding us that the climate crisis is here and now and underscoring the urgent need for action. We’re thrilled to listen to leaders from this beautiful region, whose work is crucial to building resilience, conserving habitats, and preserving the way of life here in Oregon and the entire Pacific Northwest. And we’re grateful for the chance to hear their perspectives, as we work to prepare coastal communities across America for the risks and impacts of the climate emergency.

Coastal ecosystems are crucial in our fight to solve the climate crisis. Mangroves, marshes, seagrasses, and other coastal habitats absorb huge amounts of heat-trapping carbon, storing it below the surface and helping keep temperatures in check. In fact, these habitats sequester more carbon pollution per area than any habitat on land. They also work to mitigate the impacts from intense hurricanes, storm surge, and other climate-fueled threats.

But our coastal communities need help. Decreased oxygen, changes in water flow, and other climate impacts are threatening our coasts, impacting the lives and livelihoods of the millions of Americans who live in coastal counties. Sea levels are rising in communities like my own in Tampa Bay, threatening our economies and disrupting our way of life. And our ocean – which has absorbed between one-fifth and one-third of all human-caused carbon pollution since the 1980s – is warming up at an alarming rate. We know coastal ecosystems play a key role in keeping global temperatures in check. Which is why we must take steps to conserve these crucial habitats, as part of our work to make our communities more resilient against climate threats.

Each coastal community is special. From the Gulf Coast, to the South Atlantic, to the Pacific Northwest, our coasts are home to unique cultures and diverse local economies. For that reason, we know federal opportunities for climate action need to be regionally focused, culturally appropriate, and tailored to each community’s environment. Congress plays a key role in supporting broad investments in coastal resilience, and the federal government should work with local, regional, and tribal partners to develop solutions that fit their own communities. President Biden and Congress have already taken important steps with last year’s infrastructure law and last week’s science and manufacturing legislation. We are hopeful our Senate colleagues will send us additional investments in clean energy and climate solutions later this week.

Addressing climate risks in coastal communities will also require that we look beyond the coastline. We must address all parts of the ecosystem – from far upstream to the open ocean – and tackle each challenge along the way. That’s why expanding access to data and ongoing monitoring are essential for helping local partners make key decisions. And it’s why we’re grateful to hear from our witnesses today as we implement adaptation and mitigation measures across the country.

I will now yield the remainder of my time to Rep. Bonamici for a short opening statement.