

Chair Grijalva Opening Statement

Legislative Hearing on the Ocean-based Climate Solutions Act

June 23, 2021

Today, during World Oceans Month, the Committee is meeting about the new and improved Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act.

Our November 2020 hearing introduced many of us to the concept of ocean-based climate solutions, which we learned can provide up to 21% of the annual emissions cuts we need to address climate change.

With ocean climate action, we will protect coastal communities and ecosystems from dangerous symptoms of climate change, capture and reduce greenhouse gases, and achieve justice for under-served communities. And, while we're at it, we can build back better, bolstering the economy and putting people to work in green – or blue – careers.

There are several changes in the new Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act that I'd like to highlight for you.

Some sections were removed because they have already been signed into law, such as the Digital Coast Act and the Integrated Coastal Ocean Observation System.

Other sections were removed because the Biden administration is already acting on the initiative to protect 30 percent of our ocean by 2030 and reinstating the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area.

A new title places a 5-cent excise tax on virgin plastic manufactured for single-use products, which will help pay for ocean conservation. Taxing plastic will also discourage this wasteful material that chokes our marine life, contributes to climate change, and creates environmental injustices.

Other new additions to this version of the bill include:

- a report on the United States' progress and plans toward achieving the targets of our United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to conserve and sustainably use the ocean and marine resources;
- a new grant program in the National Marine Sanctuary System to support climate research and resilience with Indigenous and local knowledge of marine and natural areas;
- a requirement that NOAA develop and coordinate data, products, and services regarding coastal flooding, sea-level rise, and Great Lakes water levels;
- a study on black carbon, quantifying black carbon emissions and examining its impacts on Indigenous communities and Arctic wildlife;
- and a study on public access to our nation's coasts, including the Great Lakes – because unfortunately, there are many barriers and obstacles for underserved communities to accessing our coasts, and climate change is only making it more difficult.

Throughout the bill, we made technical changes based on feedback from stakeholders and environmental groups, as well as NOAA and the Fish and Wildlife Service, who are with us today to provide further feedback.

We talked to a wide array of stakeholders, ensuring that our solutions are solutions for everybody.

I greatly look forward to hearing from today's panel of witnesses, who are leading ocean-climate and justice efforts at the grassroots, local, state, and national levels.

With 29 cosponsors already signed on, we are proud of this bill and the momentum for ocean climate solutions.

Finally, I would like to enter into the record two letters of support for the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act. One is signed by more than 135 organizations and businesses, representing millions of Americans. Another is from 19 of the nation's leading aquariums.