

Statement by the Honorable Paul Gosar, D.D.S.
Vice-Chair, House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee
Oversight Hearing on
“The Potential Implications of Pending Marine National Monument Designations.”
September 29, 2015

Today’s hearing brings together those concerned about the sweeping powers allowed under the Antiquities Act of 1906. Well over a century old, the law is in desperate need of modernization.

The West, of course, is all too familiar with National Monuments and not in a good way. When President Clinton single handedly designated the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah – he announced this move from a mountaintop in Arizona, I might add – it sent shockwaves of presidential abuse. Now, our domestic ocean waters have joined the party.

The prior Administration mistakenly created our first National Marine Monuments, yet this President seems to be on steroids when it comes to expanding marine monuments and creating land monuments. He has single-handedly walled off over 260 million acres of land and 403,000 total square miles of ocean in his wake. And, as we will hear today, there could be more to come with the stroke of a pen under the cover of darkness.

Arizona isn’t exactly known as a seafood harvest mecca, but we have plenty of consumers who depend on the ocean’s bounty. Our food supply is already being compromised by natural drought and land and water regulation and now we have environmental activists using a deeply flawed law in an attempt to close commercial fishing off the coasts of Alaska and New England. It’s no doubt they are banking on this Administration to help.

The Administration, in my opinion, showed its true colors when it recently held a town meeting in Providence, Rhode Island to hear public input on a proposed nearby marine monument. One witness before us today called the meeting a quote “charade” unquote that provided little details to the public. The meeting was not broadcast on radio, television or on the web – unintentionally symbolic of the era creating the Antiquities Act. The agency before us today – NOAA – needs to explain this pitiful process despite its President once saying that it would be the quote “most transparent ever” unquote.

The Antiquities Act, at the very least, should be brought into the 21st century and needs to stop being a relic hijacked by those bent upon restricting access and jobs. Taxpayers deserve better. Landowners deserve better. Fishermen deserve better. And dock workers, among the many, deserve better.

This hearing is a step towards giving those a voice that this Administration chooses to ignore.