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**Opening Statement of
Congressman Don Young**
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
Oversight Field Hearing on the National Ocean Policy
"Alaska's Sovereignty In Peril: The National Ocean Policy's Goal to Federalize Alaska"
Tuesday, April 3, 2012, at 10:00 a.m.
Anchorage, Alaska

As prepared for delivery.

In four separate Congresses, legislation was introduced to create a national ocean policy. Most recently the legislation was known as BOB - the Big Ocean Bill. Congress has not acted on these bills due to serious concerns about the scope of the legislation.

Now, without statutory authorization, this Administration has decided to create a new, vague, regulatory bureaucracy through an Executive Order.

The Executive Order creates a new National Ocean Policy and a complicated bureaucratic scheme which includes: a 27-member National Ocean Council; an 18-member Governance Coordinating Committee; 10 National Policies; 9 Regional Planning Bodies - each involving as many as 27 Federal agencies as well as states and tribes; 9 National Priority Objectives; 9 Strategic Action Plans; 7 National Goals for Coastal Marine Spatial Planning; and 12 Guiding Principles for Coastal Marine Spatial Planning. Are you confused yet?

The "Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning" initiative is the most troubling. This initiative requires the establishment of 9 Regional Planning Bodies - each made up of as many as 27 Federal agencies - which will each create marine and coastal zoning plans. All Federal agencies will be required to follow these plans when making decisions on permits or when authorizing activities. These plans will reach far inland and add a new layer of decision-makers. This will create even more uncertainty for businesses that want to invest in Alaska.

And despite the Administration's claims that it will be the most transparent ever, this new federal environmental overlay is being developed and implemented with no direct stakeholder involvement.

Nowhere in the United States will the effects of the National Ocean Policy be felt to the extent that it will in Alaska. The reach of this "ocean" policy will stretch throughout the

entire state and affect almost any activity that requires a federal permit. As we will hear from our witnesses today, the State's economic vitality is a direct result of our ability to use our natural resources. Any new federal initiative that affects our ability to use these natural resources will cost jobs.

The Administration claims that this whole National Ocean Policy is nothing more than an attempt to coordinate federal agencies and make better permitting decisions. Forgive me if I am a little suspicious when the Federal government - through an Executive Order - decides to create a new bureaucracy that will "help" us plan where activities can or cannot take place in our waters and inland. This effort to "zone" a majority of the State of Alaska using new criteria and new policy goals will not be helpful. The fact that this effort will take place whether the State of Alaska wants it to or not makes me even more suspicious.

Alaska has the most productive fisheries in the U.S. and possibly the world. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has allowed the fishermen themselves to be a part of the process - to participate in the development and interpretation of the science used to create the management plans. Almost 60% of the seafood produced in U.S. waters comes from Alaska. But now the federal government is proposing a new overlay that will second guess the North Pacific Council system and will require that they meet some new criteria - criteria that are NOT included in the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Our forests are productive despite the federal government and environmental litigants' efforts to stop that industry. We have a well-managed oil and gas industry and mining industry. And we manage our wildlife to allow for subsistence harvest and for sport hunting in a manner that has allowed for an incredible number and diversity of animals. We do not need the Federal government coming in and telling us that we now have to change our management and regulatory systems to work within a new zoning plan based on new criteria developed by bureaucrats behind closed doors in Washington, D.C.

This National Ocean Policy is a bad idea. It will create more uncertainty for businesses and will limit job growth. It will also compound the potential for litigation by groups that oppose human activities. To make matters worse, the Administration refuses to tell Congress how much money it will be diverting from other uses to fund this new Policy. The Federal budget is already tight. Taking money from existing research and management missions to fund some poorly-designed national initiative that will hinder economic growth in Alaska is just wrong.

This is not the first oversight hearing we have held on the National Ocean Policy and this will not be the last.

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses and hearing how the National Ocean Policy will affect their activities.