

June 19, 2013

Dear Member:

As the House begins consideration of the *Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013*, it is expected that an amendment sponsored by Rep. Bill Flores will be considered that would require a study on the extent of Agriculture Department activities engaged in and resources expended in furtherance of the National Ocean Policy. We urge your support for the Flores amendment.

Since the National Ocean Policy was established pursuant to Executive Order 13547 in July 2010, entities across the federal government, including USDA, have been committing unknown amounts of resources and personnel toward the development of an initiative that has not been authorized by Congress.

USDA is a member of the National Ocean Council, and USDA representatives have been identified to serve on "Regional Planning Bodies" charged with developing "Coastal and Marine Spatial Plans" in regions including the Northeast and Gulf of Mexico. Under language adopted by the executive order, such bodies could also address activities in upland areas, potentially impacting a number of additional states.

In addition, the recently-released National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan calls on USDA to protect millions of acres of lands including forestlands, and calls on agencies including USDA to "[i]ncorporate [ecosystem-based management] into Federal agency environmental planning and review processes."

Despite USDA's involvement in the National Ocean Policy over the past three years, and the obvious potential for impacts on agriculture interests to result from continued policy implementation, the full extent of the department's activities and role in the process remains entirely unclear.

In light of this situation, requiring a report on the activities that USDA has engaged in and the resources that USDA has expended in furtherance of National Ocean Policy implementation (as well as any related FY 2014 budget requests) is good public policy and ensures the kind of transparency that the American people deserve and expect.

We urge your support for the Flores amendment.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Loggers Council  
CropLife America  
National Agricultural Aviation Association  
National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
National Onion Association  
Public Lands Council  
The Fertilizer Institute