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Opening Statement of
Chairman John Fleming
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans, and Insular Affairs

On Thursday, June 13, 2013

1324 Longworth House Office Building Subcommittee

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 553, H.R. 1308, H.R. 1399, H.R. 1425, H.R. 1491, and H.R. 2219

Good morning. Today we will be discussing a number of bills.

The first bill on our list is H. R. 553, introduced by the Chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Congressman Darrell Issa of California.

This proposal will designate our Exclusive Economic Zone as the Ronald Wilson Reagan Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States. This is a fitting tribute to our 40th President who thirty years ago established our 200-mile zone by signing a Presidential Proclamation on March 10, 1983.

Ronald Reagan was one of our nation's greatest Presidents. As someone who grew up during the darkest days of the Cold War, I will always be grateful that because of his "Peace through Strength" Doctrine, the Cold War ended, the Soviet Union collapsed and millions of Americans have been able to enjoy living in the greatest country in the world.

I compliment the gentleman from California for his leadership on behalf of a great American patriot who was fond of telling us that America was truly that "Shining City Upon A Hill".

The next bill is H.R. 1308, Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act, introduced by the Chairman of the Natural Resources committee, Doc Hastings. The bill would amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to authorize the Secretary of Commerce to issue one-year permits to Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and certain tribes to lethally take sea lions on the waters of the Columbia River or its tributaries. The take authority would apply to only sea lions of healthy populations, not listed as an endangered species or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The bill would provide a temporary expedited procedure to give the states and tribes the ability to address California sea lion predation on Columbia River threatened and endangered salmonids, to ensure passage of these fish species up the Columbia River and its tributaries.

H.R. 1399, introduced by Don Young from Alaska, is the next bill. H.R. 1399 would reauthorize appropriations for the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998 for the fiscal years 2013 through 2017. The bill would use a portion of the authorized appropriations for Arctic hydrographic surveys and continental shelf delineation. It would limit administrative expenses to not more than 5 percent and lastly, it would require the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study comparing the unit costs of NOAA surveys to contractor surveys and report to Congress. As many here today know, hydrographic surveys support a variety of maritime functions including safe navigation, port and harbor maintenance, beach erosion and replenishment, coastal zone management, and offshore resource development.

H.R. 1425 and H.R. 1491 were both introduced by Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici from Oregon. The bills pertain to marine debris. H.R. 1425 would amend the Marine Debris Act to include an expedited and priority process for grants for severe marine debris events. It also requires the NOAA Administrator to take steps to encourage grantees to address marine invasive species associated with the marine debris. H.R. 1491 would allow the NOAA Administrator to issue grants using the \$5 million gifted to the U.S. from the Government of Japan to any State, locality or tribal government that was effected by a covered marine debris event resulting from the March 2011 Tohoku earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

H.R. 2219 is the last bill on our list today. Its sponsor is Don Young from Alaska. The bill would reauthorize appropriations for the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009 for fiscal years 2014-2018. Information gathered through coastal and ocean observations and products developed from it can protect life and property from marine hazards, enhance national and homeland security, facilitate safe and efficient marine operations, improve ocean health, and provide for the protection and sustainable use and enjoyment of ocean resources.

We have a busy agenda today and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. I now will recognize our Ranking Member Mr. Sablan for his opening statement.