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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman Doc Hastings**  
**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**before the Full Committee Oversight Hearing on**  
***"The President's New National Ocean Policy - A Plan for Further Restrictions on Ocean,***  
***Coastal and Inland Activities"***  
**Tuesday, October 4, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.**

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JEFFREY DUNCAN  
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In 2009, President Obama ordered the creation of an Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force to establish a new policy for the management of our oceans and coasts. From the onset, there were serious questions about the Task Force's work and recommendations. A bipartisan group of 69 Members of Congress wrote the Chairwoman of the Task Force expressing concerns that the effort was not balanced and failed to recognize the need for a multi-use policy. A multi-use policy that includes both the responsible use of our ocean resources and environmental stewardship.

From fishing to energy production to recreation, our oceans are an integral part of our national economy and support millions of jobs throughout the country. Any new regulations or changes to the management of our oceans should be done thoughtfully and in full collaboration with those affected.

Despite expressions of concern from various sectors of our economy and bipartisan voices in Congress, President Obama last year signed an Executive Order to unilaterally implement the final recommendations of the Task Force. This was done without Congressional approval and without specific statutory authority.

With the stroke of the pen, President Obama created a new, huge top-down bureaucracy that could over-ride states and local authorities, and change the way activities on the oceans, coasts and far inland will be managed.

The Executive Order creates: 10 National Policies; a 27-member National Ocean Council; an 18-member Governance Coordinating Committee; and 9 Regional Planning Bodies. This has led to the creation of: 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.

This tangled web of regulatory layers will only lead to increased uncertainty for many, diverse sectors of the economy; and, it will create demands for new spending by the federal bureaucracies charged with executing and funding this Executive Order.

Especially alarming is the mandatory ‘ocean zoning’ ordered to be imposed. Disguised with the label of Coastal Marine Spatial Planning, ‘ocean zoning’ could place huge sections of the ocean off-limits to activities not ‘zoned’ as government-approved.

‘Ocean zoning’ is poised to impact commercial and recreational fishing, energy development – including renewable energy, recreational activities, marine commerce, shipping and transportation, construction and manufacturing. It has the potential to stunt economic growth, and the jobs associated with that growth.

Though labeled as ‘ocean policy,’ the Executive Order’s scope goes well beyond the oceans and includes the federalization of the Great Lakes, where states could be dictated to by a Regional Planning Body on where certain economic activities are allowed.

Regional Planning Bodies are also empowered to reach far inland to potentially regulate activities occurring on lands adjacent to rivers, tributaries or watersheds that drain into the ocean. For example, a farmer working hundreds of miles from the coastline could be at risk of a new layer of regulatory review based on the ocean.

None of the people, communities and businesses affected the most by this policy will have representation on the Regional Planning Bodies. They have no seat at the table deciding their fate. The President’s Executive Order places all the power in the hands of the government.

Let me be clear, the Administration can and should require Executive Branch agencies with jurisdiction over our ocean policy to work in a more coordinated manner, to share information, and reduce duplication of their work. This would save money and could be supported by all of us.

However, this policy has been driven from within the White House under the claim it’s only an ocean conservation measure, when its actual effects could be far-reaching and economically hurtful to American jobs and businesses both at-sea and well-ashore.