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HOUSE RESOURCES
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Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, members of the Committee. My name is Doug Vincent-Lang. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding HJR 16.

Let me begin by stating that Alaska has a strong interest in assuring the continued health and productivity of its marine and coastal resources. We rely on these areas for commercial and sport fisheries, subsistence uses, recreation, transportation, shipping, and a multitude of other uses. Marine and coastal resources are vital to our economy, supporting a vibrant fishing industry that produces almost six billion dollars in economic activity in our state annually, accounts for approximately 60 percent of the nation's seafood production, and is our largest private sector employer. Coastal and marine areas also provide abundant development opportunities, such as; offshore oil and gas, renewable energy, shipping, and tourism. With over 44,000 miles of shoreline - more mileage than the other eight proposed planning areas combined - and an expansive EEZ, Alaska's interest in managing ocean and coastal resources cannot be overstated.

Implementation of the President's National Ocean Policy institutes a new federal framework to govern marine and coastal activities. Upon inspection, it federalizes decision processes regarding marine and coastal activities and embeds authority into regional governance boards dominated by federal agencies and federal decision processes.

Alaska's marine and coastal resources and their uses are already tightly regulated by a vast and diverse array of federal, state, and local authorities. This existing oversight has a proven track record and is fully capable of ensuring the long-term health and viability of our marine and coastal resources. We do not believe additional federal regulatory oversight is needed and we oppose creation of additional federal bureaucracy and regulation and view this as an unnecessary threat to our sovereignty. We also do not support use of this process for zoning or alternatively termed regulated marine use planning purposes. Instead, we support achieving efficiency by relying on the effective proven processes and authorities that are already in place. Any establishment of further authority should be through Congressional action. Congress has a keen awareness of the current multi-jurisdictional structure and respect for the traditional role of states in managing their marine and coastal resources.

Jurisdiction and management decisions for marine waters and submerged lands and responsibility for marine and coastal activities and ecosystems is divided between the states and the federal government. Alaska's jurisdiction includes uplands, wetlands, tide and submerged lands and extends out three nautical miles to the territorial limit. Within these areas, Alaska manages and leases lands, and with federal and local agencies, permits or restricts activities on them that could impact the environment. Alaska and the federal government each have respective sovereign responsibilities and authorities to maintain healthy, resilient, and sustainable marine and coastal resources. Any adopted program must recognize and respect Alaska's jurisdiction and sovereign authorities. Coastal states must be recognized as equal partners with sovereign jurisdictions and authorities, not relegated to stakeholder status in marine and coastal policy development and implementation.

Rather than development and implementation of new regulatory programs, a better focus would be investment in Arctic research, monitoring, and infrastructure. In short, we need more resources, not more rules, to ensure conservation of our coastal and marine resources. It is unfortunate that the new planning effort is draining agency resources at a time when core agency functions are struggling for funding due to declining federal budgets. We prefer to see the federal government focus its resources on the many needs in the Arctic and to focus on much needed research and monitoring rather than expending resources on an unnecessary and duplicative planning effort.

Finally, to ensure an effective outcome, it is important that any planning effort have clearly defined expected outcomes, an appropriate timeline, and provides both the states and the users of marine and coastal resources with primary authority to develop ocean and coastal policies. Despite numerous requests by the state to provide such specifics, they have yet to be provided. The health and management of our marine and coastal resources is simply too critical to engage in a process that does not provide meaningful dialogue opportunities to address stated concerns.

In closing, this policy is simply not ready for implementation. Until requested details are provided, especially with respect to governance and regulated use, the State cannot support

this effort as currently described. We urge Congress to involve itself in this process and for the National Ocean Council to delay implementation of this policy to allow more meaningful dialogue to address state and other affected users concerns. We also urge a more meaningful dialogue with the State that recognizes its sovereign authorities and responsibilities.

We appreciate your resolution and the concern it expresses. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.