



CALIFORNIA OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL

John Laird, Secretary for Natural Resources, Council Chair
Matt Rodriguez, Secretary for Environmental Protection
Gavin Newsom, Lieutenant Governor, State Lands Commission Chair
Susan Golding, Public Member
Geraldine Knatz, Public Member
Fran Pavley, State Senator
Toni Atkins, State Assemblymember

October 3, 2011

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ed Markey
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Fleming
Chairman
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gregorio Sablan
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings, Chairman Fleming, and Ranking Members Markey and Sablan:

On behalf of the California Ocean Protection Council, I am writing in support of the principles of H.R. 1171, the Marine Debris Act Reauthorization Amendments of 2011, which help to address and minimize the adverse impacts of pollution on our oceans.

As you know, California's ocean and coastline are among its most valuable assets, and the health of these systems is paramount to supporting our valuable coastal economy. Rich with productive and diverse ecosystems, California enjoys a very unique 1,100-mile coastline that boasts spectacular beaches, rocky cliffs, harbors, estuaries, and coastal communities. California coastal communities vary from large metropolitan cities to small fishing towns.

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Estimated at \$46 billion per year, California has the largest ocean economy in the United States. We rank number one overall for both employment and gross state product (GSP), and a high percentage of our citizens live in coastal counties (77% as of 2000). Our ocean economy supports a vibrant tourism industry, a diverse fishing industry, international ports, and other businesses. In 2010 alone, California's coastal communities helped draw approximately 200 million visitors to California. Visitor spending directly supported jobs for approximately 873,000 Californians and resulted in \$6.1 billion in direct state and local tax revenues.

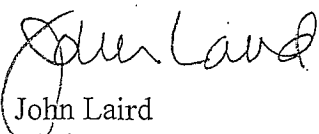
Protecting the coastal marine environment and the ocean-dependant coastal economies is critical for maintaining sustainable economic growth. However, there is broad recognition that various ocean stressors such as overfishing, habitat destruction, climate change effects, and pollution are interacting *synergistically*—beyond their additive impacts—to negatively affect our ocean. These complex challenges are mounting, and consequences will be dire unless we take strong action and provide adequate support.

One important step is reducing the amount of trash that flows into the ocean. In fact, over 14 billion pounds of trash end up in the ocean and soil our beaches every year. This trash hampers tourism, harms commercial fisheries, and is taking a toll on the marine environment. Marine debris includes everything from single-use plastic shopping bags, to derelict fishing gear, bottle caps, cigarette butts, plastic bottles, lighters, and more. In addition to affecting 267 marine species through ingestion or entanglement, this trash has devastating impacts on the U.S. economy. Municipalities pay millions of dollars a year to clean beaches and keep trash out of waterways. In Long Beach, California, alone, raking machines used to remove ocean trash from beaches cost \$18 million to install and maintain.

The original Marine Debris Act, passed in 2006 with bipartisan support, established programs within NOAA and the U.S. Coast Guard to help assess, determine, and prevent the impacts of marine debris. These programs are essential both for understanding the economic and ecological impacts of ocean trash and for minimizing these impacts through prevention, education, and removal.

Please ensure that NOAA can continue its critical work of research, prevention, and education on ocean trash. HR 1171 reaffirms NOAA's commitment to address marine debris and will streamline the program to avoid duplication with other agencies' efforts. Thank you again for your leadership on critical ocean issues, because a healthy ocean is good business for California and the nation. I urge the committee to advance this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,



John Laird
Chair, California Ocean Protection Council
Secretary for Natural Resources