

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 16, 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 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

Dear Chairmen Hastings and Fleming:

We write to respectfully request a legislative hearing on H.R. 1171, the Marine Debris Act Reauthorization Amendments of 2011, which was introduced on March 17, 2011. The original legislation, which established the NOAA Marine Debris Program, was passed in 2006 by voice vote and signed into law by President Bush. Since its inception, the NOAA Marine Debris Program has proved to be critical to preventing and reducing the amount of trash on our beaches and in the ocean, as well as significantly minimizing the economic impacts of marine debris. We have come a long way since the summer of 1988 when medical marine debris washed ashore in New Jersey and New York, costing the two states up to \$3.6 billion in cleanup costs and lost tourism revenues, as estimates suggest. However, there is still more work to be done, and the NOAA Marine Debris Program works with local communities, states, academic institutions, private companies, and the fishing industry to find solutions to this horrific problem.

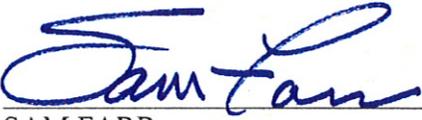
The NOAA Marine Debris program engages local communities all across the country, and public support for this program is widespread. At the 2010 Annual International Coastal Cleanup Day, which is partially funded by NOAA, over 245,000 volunteers participated all over the United States to collect trash from the coastline. In Louisiana alone, volunteers removed over 7,500 pounds of debris from the beaches. The NOAA Marine Debris Program in the Gulf of Mexico states has also focused on the mapping and removal of submerged marine debris resulting from hurricanes Katrina and Rita which poses risks to vessel traffic and fishing activities. It is estimated that marine debris causes up to \$792 million per year in damages in boating accidents, and NOAA is helping reduce this figure by providing mariners with maps and GPS data points of the location of submerged objects.

Additionally, the NOAA Marine Debris program collaborates with fishermen and the private sector to help reduce the prevalence of derelict fishing gear, which contributes to ghost fishing and has detrimental impacts on the value of commercial fisheries. For example, it is estimated that over \$250 million in marketable lobster is lost each year in derelict fishing gear. In response

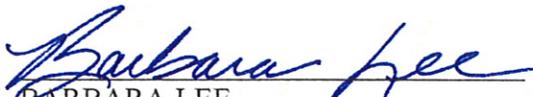
to this growing problem, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, using funds provided by NOAA Marine Debris Program, has set up an initiative where fishermen are paid to retrieve derelict crab pots using remote sensing technology. This NOAA partnership has been wildly successful, and since 2008, the fishermen have retrieved over 28,000 pots from Chesapeake Bay, which would otherwise have continued to catch and kill up to 1.4 million valuable target crab species. This project will serve as a model for other locations, and similar partnerships between NOAA and the industry have already formed in other areas across the United States including but not limited to North Carolina, New Jersey, Alaska, and Washington.

We can act now to ensure that NOAA Marine Debris Program is able to maintain these vitally important activities. We hope that we can work together to move H.R.1171 forward, so our country can continue to address the impacts of ocean trash on marine ecosystems, coastal economies, and navigation safety.

Sincerely,

  
SAM FARR

  
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN

  
BARBARA LEE

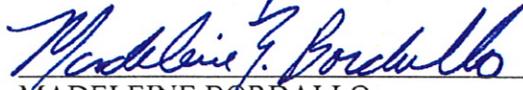
  
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DANA ROHRABACHER

  
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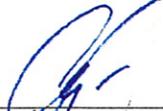
  
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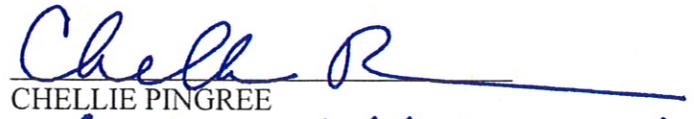
  
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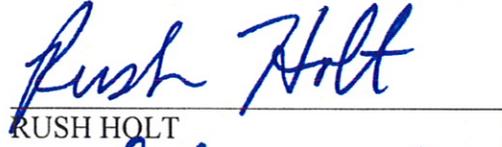
  
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