

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 16, 2011

The Honorable John Mica
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank LoBiondo
Chairman
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
U.S. House of Representatives
507 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Mica and LoBiondo:

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.

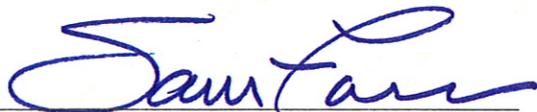
The NOAA Marine Debris program engages local communities all across the country, and public support for this program is widespread. At the 2010 Annual International Coastal Cleanup Day, which is partially funded by NOAA, over 245,000 volunteers participated all over the United States to collect trash from the beaches and water. In Florida alone, there were 25,290 volunteers who removed over 349,000 pounds of debris from the beaches. The NOAA Marine Debris Program in the Gulf of Mexico states is also focused on the mapping and removal of submerged marine debris resulting from hurricanes Katrina and Rita which poses risks to vessel traffic and human safety. It is estimated that marine debris causes up to \$792 million per year in damages in boating accidents, and NOAA, in conjunction with the Coast Guard, is helping reduce this figure by providing mariners with maps and GPS data points of the location of submerged objects.

Additionally, the 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

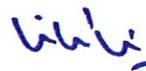
problem, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, using funds provided by the NOAA Marine Debris Program, has set up an initiative where fishermen are paid to retrieve derelict crab pots using remote sensing technology. This partnership has been wildly successful, and since 2008, fishermen have retrieved over 28,000 pots from Chesapeake Bay, which would otherwise have continued to catch and kill valuable target species. The project will serve as a model for other locations, and similar partnerships between NOAA and the industry have already formed. For instance, the Fishing for Energy program is a partnership between NOAA and the Covanta Energy Corporation, based in New Jersey. Through this partnership, recycling bins have been placed in ports all over the country in which fishermen can dispose of old fishing gear at no cost, rather than paying to dispose of it in a landfill. Covanta Energy then takes the gear and recycles it, creating electricity to power homes. The bins in New Jersey have already accumulated over 95,000 pounds of old gear.

We can act now to ensure that the 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



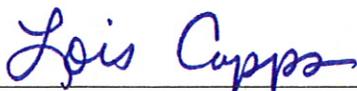
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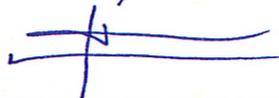
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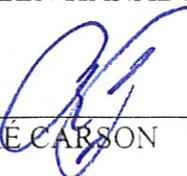
MICHAEL M. HONDA



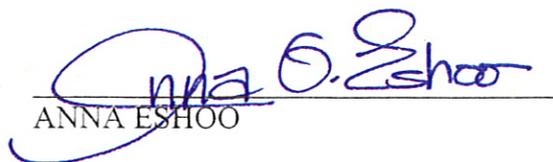
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TED DEUTCH



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