



PRESS RELEASE

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OBAMA'S FINAL OCEANS PLAN REMAINS UNDER WRAPS Hastings Still Waiting For Answers To Committee Questions

The Obama administration yesterday reported that the final version of the president's National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan will not be released this week as originally expected. In a meeting of the Ocean Research Advisory Panel yesterday, National Ocean Council Office Director Deerin Babb-Brott suggests that the final plan will be released to the public later.

According to the National Ocean Policy Coalition (NOPC) which represents diverse interest groups united in helping protect the user interests by ensuring the new National Ocean Policy is done in such a way that it is helpful rather than harmful to national interests, Babb-Brott said the administration is still working on its final plan. Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA), an outspoken opponent of the president's National Ocean Policy, is one of more than 30 NOPC members.

President Obama passed the National Ocean Policy by executive order in 2010, prompting RFA to [call out the administration](#) for behaving more like a monarchy in passing flawed legislation through executive privilege as opposed to legislative debate. "Our President appears to be infatuated with nonsense and bureaucracy, and once again proves that his authority to rule is more powerful than the legislative process alone, signing his name to decrees as if he were a king," said RFA executive director Jim Donofrio at the time.

But Donofrio and the RFA aren't the only ones frustrated by the president's handling of the executive order since the summer of 2010. Late Thursday afternoon, House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (R-WA) sent a letter to the co-chairs of President Obama's National Ocean Council, repeating his request that the Obama Administration answer outstanding questions and document requests regarding the president's National Ocean Policy and mandatory ocean zoning initiative before finalizing the draft implementation plan.

"More than two years have passed since President Obama unilaterally issued a new National Ocean Policy that created an expansive federal bureaucracy to manage ocean activities and resources without any specific Congressional approval, and more than eight months have passed since a draft plan was released containing more than 50 proposed actions for implementing the National Ocean Policy and mandatory zoning of the ocean and coastal areas," Hastings said in his letter.

"Despite this passage of time, Congress and the American public are still left questioning the legal justification, regulatory burdens, funding sources, and economic impacts of the National Ocean Policy," writes Hastings. [Click here](#) to read a full copy of the letter.

In his letter to National Ocean Council Co-Chairs Nancy Sutley and John Holdren, Rep. Hastings called on the Obama administration to answer questions and provide previously-requested information and documents to the Committee prior to finalization of the draft implementation Plan. He specifically asked for the information to provided to the Committee no later than September 5, 2012.

Donofrio said the president's executive order creating the National Ocean Policy in the summer of 2010 bypassed the House Natural Resources Committee and the entire Congress in order to implement an unfavorable piece of legislation. "Rep. Sam Farr of California tried pushing this Pew Oceans Commission ocean ownership agenda through the House for the past decade, but every time his doomsday bill got debated in the bipartisan Committee it was tossed out for being a bureaucratic nightmare," said Donofrio. "Given the fact that this president loves bureaucracy so much, this was an easy end-around for enviro's to bypass Congressional oversight."

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Hastings has already sent several letters to the Co-Chairs of the National Ocean Council requesting information on the development, legal authority, activities, staffing, and funding of the National Ocean Policy. The Administration has yet to fully comply with the requests. Hastings also sent two letters asking that the Administration extend the public comment period on the draft National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan for an extra 90 days to allow ample time for public and Congressional review of the sweeping new policy. The Administration declined the request.

In May, the House of Representatives [passed an amendment](#) by Rep. Bill Flores (R-TX) to the *FY2013 Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations* bill to halt funding for the implementation of President Obama's ocean zoning and National Ocean Policy. Over 80 groups across a spectrum of sectors including agriculture, fishing, construction, manufacturing, mining, oil and natural gas, and renewable energy, including RFA, joined forces in a [letter](#) to support Rep. Flores' amendment.

The House also included a provision in the *FY2013 Interior and Environment Appropriations* bill prohibiting funding for the President's National Ocean Policy and requiring a report on previous funding for the policy.

The National Ocean Policy and the Farr Oceans 21 bill have been frequently skewered in the House Natural Resources Committee by members from both sides of the aisle. In testimony given before the [Committee on October 26, 2011](#), Sutley said "The National Ocean Policy does not establish any new regulations or restrict the multiple uses of the ocean, and does not expand the scope of Federal jurisdiction." Under questioning by Committee Member Steve Southerland (R-FL) in which he read from a page of the president's own report which used the words "regulation" and "enforcement," Ms. Sutley appeared confused, unable to explain the discrepancies between her testimony and the presidential edict.

In summarizing his letter yesterday back to Sutley and Holdren yesterday, Hastings said "notwithstanding this lack of transparency about legal authorities, funding, and staffing, it appears the Obama Administration has been continuing apace its efforts to zone the ocean and establish this new federal bureaucracy well before the implementation plan is finalized and released to the public."

For more information on President Obama's plans to impose mandatory ocean zoning visit: <http://naturalresources.house.gov/OceanZoning>.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA's Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation's saltwater fisheries. For more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.