



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Environment Subcommittee Hearing:

Defining a National ‘Oceanshot’: Accelerating Ocean and Great Lakes Science and Technology

June 7, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill, for holding this important hearing on the future of ocean research in the United States. It is an exciting time to be discussing the ocean given it is both World Ocean Month and Capitol Hill Ocean Week! I also want to welcome our expert panel of witnesses and thank them for sharing their perspectives with us today.

Representing a landlocked city like Dallas has not decreased my appreciation for the importance of the world’s oceans. A lot of attention is rightfully given to the impacts of extreme weather, sea level rise, and subsidence on coastal communities. But the oceans also impact those of us who do not live on the coasts.

It is important to realize that the weather we experience is greatly influenced by our oceans. Warmer oceans cause stronger hurricanes. They can also contribute to extreme precipitation events. This can lead to damaging floods, like the ones both in Texas and across the Midwest in recent years. Having a better understanding of our oceans, through observations, will improve weather forecasts regardless of where we live.

We also know that the oceans have mitigated even worse impacts of climate change by absorbing much of the excess heat and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. But this buffering effect has impacted ocean ecosystems. Absorption of carbon dioxide emissions by our oceans has led to more acidic environments that can harm marine organisms. This Committee was instrumental in the passage of two bipartisan ocean acidification bills out of the House last month. These bills will help coastal communities and economies address the impacts of ocean acidification.

There are many topics within the field of ocean science, but I expect ocean exploration will be a key part of a national “oceanshot” initiative. On this front, we are working on a bill to advance our national ocean exploration priorities. This bill will also support efforts to build a more inclusive and diverse ocean exploration enterprise. It is my hope that it will also be an enabler for increasing diversity in ocean sciences more broadly.

It is clear there is a lot of potential for the U.S. to become the global leader in ocean science and technology. I look forward to today’s discussion on what our country’s future “oceanshot” should be, and how this Committee can help the United States live up to our leadership potential in this area. Thank you and I yield back.