

November 27, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
2209 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Vitter
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nick Rahall
2307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Boxer and Shuster, Ranking Members Vitter and Rahall and Conferees:

The dive community is a diverse one, but we all have one thing in common: we all benefit from healthy, productive oceans. If the health of the oceans worsens so do our experiences underwater. As divers, we see firsthand the incredible beauty and, too often, the increasing burden our oceans face. That is why we are asking for your leadership to protect our oceans and coasts by supporting the National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO) and opposing any effort to undermine the National Ocean Policy in the final Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

Recently, during the Dive Equipment & Marketing Association (DEMA) 2013 show, a cross-section of our community, including businesses, scientists, environmental non-profits, and government employees attended a session called "Bluing the Dive Industry," which identified the need for the dive community to ensure ocean health is recognized and supported. We fully support this belief and are members of the diving community committed to ensuring our industry, sport and the nation have an ocean ethic. We write today to ensure *you* know that many in our industry prioritize healthy oceans and support our National Ocean Policy and a National Endowment for the Oceans.

The WRDA conference will consider two provisions that significantly impact our nation's oceans and coasts and the economies that rely on them. **We support the Senate-passed National Endowment for the Oceans**, which would help improve ocean health and maximize the economic benefits these resources provide our nation. **We oppose the House-passed Flores rider**, which would place damaging restrictions on the use of common-sense ocean management tools like ocean planning and ecosystem-based management found in our National Ocean Policy. To maximize the benefits of a healthy ocean and its vibrant economy, **we urge you to include the NEO provision and strike the Flores rider from WRDA.**

The National Ocean Policy improves our planning so that we protect important habitat and ocean wildlife, plan to address changing ocean ecosystems, build climate resilience and encourage sustainable use, and provide greater certainty for businesses and other ocean users, including divers. The Flores rider (Section 146 to H.R. 3080) seeks to undermine and impede its implementation by prohibiting the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), a key coastal and ocean management agency, from coordinating with coastal states, other federal agencies, and the public as they engage in ocean planning and ecosystem-based management. Banning coordination between the Corps and these entities is misguided. This rider infringes on the rights of states to continue using ocean planning as a tool to better protect and manage ocean and coastal resources. Imposing such an arbitrary restriction harms states, the Corps, and the ocean and coastal economy. **Please oppose the Flores rider and strike this harmful rider from the final bill.**

The National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO, Title XII to S. 601) is a bi-partisan effort to ensure that present and future generations benefit from the ecological, economic, cultural and recreational resources of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. It would authorize grants to state, regional, and tribal entities, as well as nonprofit organizations and academic institutions. NEO would support efforts to conserve and restore ocean resources and help develop the baseline science, monitoring, and observation data to facilitate sustainable uses that will create jobs and support coastal economies. **To enable this critical work, we urge you to include the NEO provision in a final WRDA bill.**

The entire diving industry and community – divers as well as dive business owners – have a vested interest in ocean health. We benefit from the beauty of healthy ocean ecosystems and we have a responsibility to ensure those places continue to be healthy, productive places divers can continue to enjoy into the future. ***We urge you to oppose the Flores rider and support the National Endowment for the Oceans in conference.***

Sincerely,

Philippe Cousteau, Jr.
Explorer, Environmental Advocate & Social
Entrepreneur

Dr. Sylvia Earle
Founder
Mission Blue

Brian Skerry
Diver and Photographer
Uxbridge, MA

Mandy-Dae Krack
PADI Course Director,
World Record Holder & Owner
Performance Freediving International

Alex F. Brylske, Ph.D.
2012 DAN/Rolux Diver of the Year
Florida Keys, FL

Vicki Nichols Goldstein
Founder
Colorado Ocean Coalition
Boulder, CO

Cheryl Patterson
Deep Blue Adventures
Swanton, OH

Francesca Koe
PADI MSDT Instructor #186082
Editor-in-Chief
DeeperBlue.com

Laurie J. Wilson
Dive Travel Business News
Chicago, IL

Nicole Ordway
Force-E Scuba Centers
Pompano Beach, FL

Greg Barron
Director West Coast Shark Operations
Incredible Adventures
Sarasota, FL

Craig A. Gentry
President/Founder
Hawaii Freedivers, LLC
Hawaii

Rebekah Kaufmann
Kohala Divers
Kamuela, HI

Philip G. Renaud
Executive Director
Living Oceans Foundation
Landover, MD

Louie Psihoyos
Oceanic Preservation Society
Boulder, CO

Shana Phelan
Pura Vida Divers
Riviera Beach, FL

Dr. Thomas Armbruster, MD
SandyHook SeaLife Foundation
Medford, NJ

Suuz Martines
ScubaDoRag
Charlotte, NC

Steve Mussman
Sea Lab
Lawrenceville, GA

Burt Jones
Secret Sea Visions
Carlsborg, WA

Alex Shure
Shure Underwater Media
PADI Divemaster #293595
Melrose, MA

Susan Bruce
The WILD Foundation
Denver, CO

Amanda Ault
PADI Instructor

Brian Barnes
PADI Divemaster #318029

Leon Jon Bonney, Esq.
PADI MSDT Instructor
San Francisco, CA

Jon Paul Brooker
Diver
St. Petersburg, FL

Kate Brooker
Diver
Brooklyn, NY

Kassandra Cervený
Diver
Washington, DC

Christopher Chin
PADI Divemaster
San Francisco, CA

Sean Cosgrove
Advanced Open Water Diver
Washington, DC

Cherie Crawford
Diver
San Antonio, TX

Josh Cummings
Diver, Underwater Photographer,
Environmental Scientist
Mashpee, MA

Virgina 'Gina' Davenport
PSDI Master Scuba Diver Trainer
Washington, DC

Diane H. Davidson
Diver
Falls Church, VA

Seth A. Davidson
Diver
Falls Church, VA

Tim Dillingham
Diver
Highlands, NJ

Brandon M. Doheny
Assistant Research Specialist
Marine Science Institute
Santa Barbara, CA

Jenna Driscoll
Diver
Santa Barbara, CA

Jenn & Tyson Eckerle
Divers
Sacramento, CA

James Edwards
Diver
Boulder, CO

Kate English
PADI OWSI
AAUS Scientific Diver, NSS-CDS
Santa Barbara, CA

Leah Fine
Diver
Cambridge, MA

Jenny Miller Garmendia
Diver
Monterey, CA

Suzanne Garrett
Diver
Washington, DC

Matt Gove
Diver
Brooklyn, NY

Elizabeth Hanks
Rescue Diver

Craig Harris
PADI Divemaster

Arlo Hemphill
AAUS Scientific Diver PADI Rescue Diver
Ocean City, MD

John Hocevar & Victoria Scrimmer
Divers
Washington, DC

Matthew Kirby
Diver
Washington, DC

Nicholas J. Mallos, MEM
Diver
Washington, DC

Katie Matthews
Diver & Marine Scientist
Philadelphia, PA

Courtney Mattison
Diver
Denver, CO

Kelly McCane
PADI Master Instructor

Christian McDonald
Diving Safety Officer
Scripps Institution of Oceanography
La Jolla, CA

Abi Smigel Mullens
PADI Instructor #237506

Bill Oakes
PADI Course Director

Susan Little Olcott
PADI Master Diver
Brunswick, ME

Hawkeye Parker
SSI Certified SCUBA Diver
Performance Freediving Certified Instructor
San Francisco, CA

Christine Quigley
Diver
Santa Barbara, CA

Lee Richter
Diver
Miami, FL

Corey Ridings
Diver
Santa Cruz, CA

Julia Roberson
Diver
Asheville, NC

Alba Garcia Rodriguez
PADI Dive Master
Takoma Park, MD

Jessica Schoenig
Diver
Washington, DC

Peter Shelley
Open Water Diver
Marblehead, MA

Stephanie Tobor
Diving Enthusiast
Evergreen, CO

Bill Weiss
Advanced Scuba Diver / Freediver

Crow White
Assistant Professor
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA

Scott Winter
Diver
Freeport, IL

Mark Winter
Diver
Freeport, IL

Sarah Winter Whelan
Advanced Open Water Diver
Portland, OR