

# The Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act of 2020

**The Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act of 2020**, sponsored by House Natural Resources Committee Chair Raúl Grijalva, is comprehensive and ambitious legislation that seeks to leverage the ocean's potential in the fight against climate change by promoting offshore renewable energy, protecting blue carbon, supporting climate-ready fisheries, expanding marine protected areas, improving ocean health, and more. By implementing a full suite of ocean-based climate solutions, this legislation would help frontline communities most at risk in the face of climate change, increase the resilience of our ocean ecosystems, and help put the United States back in a leadership role in the global effort to fight the climate crisis. Specifically, the bill will:

## **Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

The bill supports the transition to a clean energy economy by reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with ocean sectors and increasing ocean-based renewable energy—helping us to move away from fossil fuels and protect the ocean and coastal habitats that are important to healthy fish, marine wildlife, and coastal economies. Highlights include:

- Prohibiting new oil and gas leasing in all areas of the Outer Continental Shelf.
- Setting a national goal for offshore wind energy production of 12.5 gigawatts by 2025 and 25 gigawatts by 2030, and increasing funding for R&D and strategies for the protection of wildlife.
- Requiring shipping vessels to measure and report CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on an annual basis.
- Incentivizing increased fuel efficiency for fishing vessels.

## **Increase Carbon Storage in Blue Carbon Ecosystems**

The bill recognizes the carbon storage potential and other co-benefits provided by “blue carbon” ecosystems like salt marshes, sea grasses, and mangroves. These ecosystems absorb carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and safely store it at a [rate of up to four times](#) that of forests on land. They also protect coastal communities by limiting the impacts of coastal erosion, flooding, and storms—all while providing habitat for marine wildlife and fisheries. Highlights include:

- Supporting efforts to understand, map, protect and restore these ecosystems, with priority for projects that would protect fish and wildlife habitat and benefit lower income communities.
- Improving federal cooperation and authorizing much-needed funding for the protection and restoration of these critical habitats.
- Establishing a grant program for wetlands restoration that sequesters CO<sub>2</sub> or reduces CO<sub>2</sub> or methane emissions and sets a goal to restore 1.5 million acres of coastal wetlands over 10 years.

## **Promote Coastal Resiliency**

The bill promotes coastal resiliency and adaptation to protect our coasts and communities from the climate impacts we can't avoid. It authorizes investment in coastal restoration and resilience that is a win-win-win for our economy, our frontline communities, and our environment. Highlights include:

- Authorizing \$3 billion to support shovel-ready coastal restoration projects with priority to projects that help stimulate the economy, provide jobs for workers affected by COVID-19, and assist communities of color, as well as low-income, Tribal, and rural communities.
- Supporting much-needed grants and research to advance our understanding of best practices for increased coastal resiliency and adaptation.
- Requiring a coordinated Federal response to support the voluntary relocation of communities impacted by sea level rise.

### **Improve Ocean Protection**

The bill takes steps to promote and protect healthy ocean systems and wildlife populations, which are better able to adapt to the effects of climate change. Marine protected areas, like our protected areas on land, are a key part of protecting biodiversity while tackling climate change – which is more critical than ever in the face of the [biodiversity crisis](#). Highlights of the bill include:

- Setting a goal to protect at least [30% of our ocean by 2030](#), and creating a new federal task force to submit a plan to Congress with an inventory of existing MPAs and new areas that deserve additional protection.
- Initiating the designation process for successful national marine sanctuary nominations.
- Increasing protections for deep sea corals by directing NOAA to designate areas in which use of bottom-tending fishing gear is prohibited under the Magnuson Stevens Act.
- Strengthening protections for marine mammals from ocean noise and vessel collisions.

### **Support Climate-Ready Fisheries**

The bill supports the development and implementation of strategies to improve the management of fisheries in a changing climate and also helps to promote U.S. seafood sourced from environmentally and climate-friendly fisheries. Highlights include:

- Supporting the development of innovative tools and approaches to increase the capacity of fisheries management to adapt to climate change.
- Leveraging the Saltonstall-Kennedy fund to promote consumption of U.S. seafood products that are environmentally or climate-friendly, invasive, or from well-managed but less-known species.
- Initiating a science-based review of jurisdiction and allocation concerns for shifting fish stocks.

### **Tackle Ocean Health Challenges**

This bill addresses ocean health challenges of ocean acidification and harmful algal blooms, both of which cause significant harm to the U.S. seafood, recreation, and tourism industries, as well as human communities and ocean wildlife and ecosystems. Highlights include:

- Enhancing the coordination of federal research, improving monitoring and ocean observation, and offering prizes to advance understanding of ocean acidification.
- Making harmful algal blooms eligible for federal disaster relief and emergency assistance to improve the protection of coastal communities.

### **Restore U.S. Leadership in International Ocean Governance**

The bill strengthens U.S. leadership in international ocean governance at a time when transboundary pressures on our ocean demands a coordinated response. These actions would both strengthen U.S. security and promote a resilient global ocean for the 21st century. Highlights include:

- Promoting international coordination and information-sharing on marine energy development, marine protected areas, and marine resource management.
- Recommending ratification of the United Convention on the Law of the Sea to further our environmental, social, and economic goals regarding international fisheries management, and to improve our ability to engage in disputes over navigational rights, treaty interpretations, and military exercises in coastal areas.

