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UNH Fisheries Expert Testifies Before Congress On Future Of NOAA, U.S. Ocean Policy

David Sims

UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space

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MEDIA ADVISORY: UNH Fisheries Expert Testifies Before Congress On Future Of NOAA, U.S. Ocean Policy

Contact: [David Sims](#)
603-862-5369
Science Writer
Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space

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Reporters and editors: Andrew Rosenberg is available to discuss his testimony and the issue of oceans management and protection in general on Friday or Monday by cell phone (603-767-9501) or e-mail andy.rosenberg@unh.edu.

DURHAM, N.H. -- University of New Hampshire scientist Andrew Rosenberg, professor of natural resources at the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space, testified this morning before the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans in an effort to help lawmakers move forward with legislation aimed at vastly improved management and protection of U.S. oceans.

According to Rosenberg, former Northeast Regional Administrator for the National Marine Fisheries Service, and commissioner on the presidentially appointed U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, lawmakers are now taking up legislation on oceans and climate change and there is a real chance of making significant progress in the new Congress.

Today's testimony concerned H.R. 21, the Oceans Conservation, Education and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act. The bill, Rosenberg notes, has included many of the items recommended by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (<http://www.oceancommission.gov>), on which he served.

Rosenberg addressed five major areas relative to the legislation, including the need for ecosystem-based management as a guiding principle for ocean policy.

According to Rosenberg, ecosystem-based management is a "fundamental shift in how we view and manage our interactions with natural resources" and sets a different process for policymaking, "starting from a different perspective on goal-setting through the basis for resolving conflicts."


To accomplish this, the lead federal agency responsible for carrying out ocean policies, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will need a new structure that integrates across its disparate programs and often conflicting mandates including fisheries, protected species, habitat, coastal zones, sanctuaries, and estuarine research reserves.

And, Rosenberg stressed, the need for NOAA to have a truly connected overall program – with shared planning, a sense of shared mandates, and a coordinated strategy – is imperative because our oceans are indeed in trouble.

In written testimony he told committee members, "I believe that we must immediately begin to make changes in U.S. ocean policy to reverse an alarming, widespread degradation in the health of the oceans and coasts, vital living marine resources, and coastal communities. I believe that our ocean environment is at risk and a change of course is needed to reduce that

risk. We must reinvigorate and fully fund our leadership in ocean science and our understanding of the life-support system of the earth.”

With climate change issues getting a lot of attention on Capitol Hill, Rosenberg says, “It’s my understanding that lawmakers are going to try to move climate legislation, and it is my hope they will take into account how our oceans affect and are affected by climate change.”

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