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April 8, 2019

The Honorable Lizzie Fletcher
Chairwoman
Environment Subcommittee
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roger Marshall
Ranking Member
Environment Subcommittee
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Fletcher and Ranking Member Marshall:

On behalf of Ocean Conservancy, I write to provide our organization's support for several bills scheduled for markup by the House Science, Space, and Technology Environment Subcommittee, including H.R.1237, the *COAST Research Act of 2019*, H.R.1716, the *Coastal Communities Ocean Acidification Act of 2019*, H.R.1921, the *Ocean Acidification Innovation Act of 2019*, and H.R.988, the *NEAR Act of 2019*. These bills will improve how the federal government prepares for and responds to the impacts from ocean acidification, and deserve further consideration and approval by the Committee and the full U.S. House of Representatives.

Ocean acidification is changing the chemistry of our ocean, and coastal communities are already seeing the effects. As the ocean absorbs much of the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, it mixes with seawater, causing an increase in the water's acidity. This increase in acidity causes a broad range of negative impacts that disrupt the benefits that ocean systems and resources provide to human communities. Coral reef-associated fisheries and tourism are put at risk as corals, oysters, clams, and other animals struggle to build their shells and skeletons in more acidic waters. Additionally, fishery revenues could decline if ocean acidification decreases the recruitment or slows the growth of lucrative species like sea scallops and red king or Tanner crab.

Following the widespread death of larval shellfish that nearly bankrupted hatcheries in the Pacific Northwest in the mid-2000s because of ocean acidification, Congress took action to better understand the impact of ocean acidification on people and marine resources. In 2009, the *Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act* (FOARAM) was signed into law. FOARAM established the NOAA Ocean Acidification Program and the Inter-Agency Working Group on Ocean Acidification, which provides a coordinated response by U.S. federal agencies to understand, track, and address ocean acidification. Much of our knowledge and understanding of ocean acidification that has emerged in the last decade can be credited to the work authorized by FOARAM, and it is crucial that Congress continue to build upon this foundation to better understand and address the impacts from ocean acidification.

The bills under consideration by the Committee will strengthen our nation's investments in ocean acidification research and monitoring. The *Coastal Communities Ocean Acidification Act of 2019* would better inform federal research and monitoring plans by taking into consideration the needs of coastal communities vulnerable to ocean acidification, and the *Ocean Acidification Innovation Act of 2019* would incentivize technological innovation in our nation's ability to understand, research, monitor, or adapt to ocean acidification. Further, the *NEAR Act of 2019* would improve our ability to understand the impacts from ocean acidification in estuarine environments, and the *COAST Research Act of 2019* would

reauthorize our nation's investments in ocean acidification and broaden the scope of federal work to better understand the effects from acidification not only in the open ocean but also in the coastal zone.

Importantly, each of these bills has support from members of both parties. These members recognize that coastal communities are experiencing the impacts from ocean acidification now, and there is a role for the federal government to play to better understand the science behind acidification and prepare communities for acidification's effects.

We appreciate the Committee's consideration of these bills, and encourage you and your colleagues to swiftly approve these bills and report them to the full U.S. House of Representatives for approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Watters", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff Watters
Director, Government Relations
Ocean Conservancy