

Legislative Report 2023 - 2024

118th Congress (2023 -2024) Second Session

June 2024 by Anne Giesecke, Ph.D.

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Those of you who have been reading these reports since 1988 will notice a change in emphasis. Reports up to now have listed House and Senate laws and bills for many pages. The scarcity of action by the US Congress has meant that more NOAA and United Nations actions have been noted. Usually, the report was done in January for the previous year. This year the report was compiled in June to have something to report. The report does not include Resolutions, Authorizations or Appropriations. This material is taken from the web site www.congress.gov.

Participation in the regulatory and legislative process is critical for the success of democracy. Look for opportunities to participate in government decision making. Talk to or write to your Representatives and Senators about bills and apply for NOAA Advisory Council positions.

During the 118th Congress more than 483 Bills were introduced in the House of Representatives (H.R.) and the Senate (S.), that dealt with ocean management.

The Bills addressed the following topics:

- Acidification
- Antidumping, plastic waste
- Arctic drilling
- Blue Energy
- Bycatch
- Chesapeake Bay
- Climate impacts on regional coastal and ocean communities
- Endangered species
- Energy production and pipeline safety
- Fisherman, fisheries, salmon, sharks, finfish, red snapper
- Great Lakes mapping
- Marine mammals
- North Pacific Ocean protection
- Renewable Fuel for Ocean-going vessels
- Southern California Coast protection
- Trawling
- West Coast protection

H.R. 2741. DEMA supports the **DIVE BOAT Act**, Don't Imperil Vessel Employees, Business Owners, and Tourism Act. The bill would provide insurance relief for liability claims. The amendment is part of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2023, H.R. 2741.

Bills that passed the House or Senate are listed below. No laws have been passed at this time.

Coastal Communities Ocean Acidification Act of 2023

H.R. 676, S. 1808 Passed the House (05/09/2023)

This bill requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Ocean Acidification Advisory Board to collaborate with various entities affected by ocean acidification and coastal acidification (i.e., the decrease in pH and changes in water chemistry of certain bodies of water and waterways).

Specifically, NOAA's Ocean Acidification Program must collaborate with state, local, and tribal entities that are conducting or have completed community vulnerability assessments, research planning, or climate action plans related to ocean and coastal acidification and their impacts on coastal communities. The program must (1) support collaborative interagency relationships and information sharing involving state, local, and tribal entities; (2) assist these entities in improving their existing programs to better address ocean and coastal acidification; and (3) assist these entities in identifying whether other communities can use these activities as a model.

The bill also requires the Ocean Acidification Advisory Board to include two representatives from Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia that are affected by ocean and coastal acidification.

Save Our Seas 2.0 Amendments Act

H.R. 886 Passed House (03/11/2024) S 318 Passed the Senate 12/13/2023

This bill reauthorizes through FY2025 and modifies the Marine Debris Program and makes other modifications to the Marine Debris Act.

The bill modifies the program to allow the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to (1) enter into other agreements, outside of contracts; (2) make in-kind contributions for projects; and (3) receive and expend funds from outside sources for projects.

Next, the bill modifies requirements for the Marine Debris Foundation, including by modifying the process for approving or removing members of the foundation's board of directors. The board must appoint a chief executive officer of the Foundation.

The bill also directs the foundation to locate its principal office in the National Capital Region or a coastal shoreline community.

In addition, the bill requires the foundation to develop best practices for conducting outreach to Indian tribes.

Supporting the Health of Aquatic systems through Research Knowledge and Enhanced Dialogue Act or the SHARKED Act

H.R. 4051 Passed House (02/05/2024)

This bill establishes requirements to address shark depredation (i.e., consumption of a fishing catch by a shark before it is retrieved by a fisherman). Specifically, the bill directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to establish a task force to identify and address critical needs with respect to shark depredation. The task force must terminate within seven years.

When making funds available under its cooperative research and management program, NOAA must also prioritize projects related to understanding shark depredation.

Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance and Rehabilitation Act of 2023

H.R. 2560 Passed House (04/11/2024)

This bill requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish a Sea Turtle Rescue Assistance and Rehabilitation Grant Program to encourage and facilitate coordinated rapid response and rescue of stranded marine turtles.

South Pacific Tuna Treaty Act of 2023

H.R. 1793 Reported to House (03/21/2024)

This bill revises federal requirements for U.S. commercial fishing vessels operating in the South Pacific. The changes reflect amendments to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty that were agreed to at Nadi, Fiji, on December 3, 2016. The treaty details mutual obligations of the United States and 16 Pacific Island countries when U.S. fishing vessels operate in the region.

Added August 2024

The Alabama Underwater Forest National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act

H.R.897 Passed the House (7/8/2024)

The bill—which was introduced by Reps. Jerry Carl (R-AL-01), Garret Graves (R-LA-06), Terri Sewell (D-AL-07), and Seth Moulton, (D-MA-06)—would designate an ancient cypress forest in the Gulf of Mexico as the Alabama Underwater Forest National Marine Sanctuary. Recreational fishing, diving and mooring are allowed.