July XX, 2010

The Honorable Nick J Rahall, II
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth Office Building
Washington DC

The Honorable Doc Hastings
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth Office Building
Washington DC

Dear Chairman Rahall and Ranking Member Hastings:

We would like to thank you for your support section 605 of the Consolidated Land, Energy and Aquatic Resources Act of 2010 that would establish the Ocean Resources Conservation and Assistance (ORCA) Fund for grants to coastal states, long-term ocean and coastal observations, and regional ocean partnerships. We hope that the final House oil spill package will include this critical provision.

The ORCA Fund would ensure that the Gulf of Mexico would have the data and information required for a quick and effective restoration effort and ensure that all regions of our country, including the Great Lakes, are “spill ready” should they experience a spill or other extreme environmental event. The long-term monitoring infrastructure established by the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) also offers broader benefits including those relevant to climate and ecosystem trends, water quality, marine operations, and coastal hazards.

A sustained ocean observing system for the nation is fundamental to improving our understanding and stewardship of the oceans and coasts. Had such system been fully funded and implemented before the Deepwater Horizon spill, responders would not be faced with the current dearth of ocean observations in the Gulf of Mexico that limits plume tracking, modeling, and response.

We thank you for your commitment to our coasts and Great Lakes and your support for an Ocean Resources Conservation and Assistance Fund.

Sincerely,