



Federal Legislative Updates:

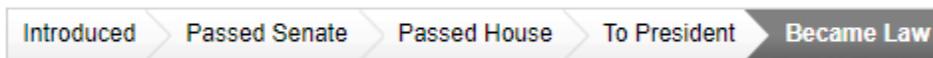
The following provides short summaries of and links to the federal laws or legislative bills related to ocean management or policy, as obtained from the <https://www.congress.gov/> website. Please note this is not an exhaustive list of all bills under consideration. If you would like any bills added to this list, please contact: Andy Lanier at Andy.Lanier@state.or.us.

Laws Passed during 2020

America's Conservation Enhancement Act (Signed into Law 10/30/2020)

<https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ188/PLAW-116publ188.pdf>

Tracker:



Now enacted into law, this bill reauthorizes the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) and codifies the National Fish Habitat Partnership (NFHP), two of the most successful voluntary conservation efforts in the nation. The law also reauthorizes the Chesapeake Bay Program and creates funding authorizations for other crucial conservation programs.

The National Fish Habitat Partnership is an unprecedented effort to protect, restore, and enhance fish and aquatic communities in the U.S. Since 2006, NFHP has completed over 1,000 projects in 50 states. From freshwater to estuarine and coastal projects, NFHP protects, restores, and enhances fish habitat nationwide, leveraging federal, state, tribal, and private funding resources. NFHP is comprised of 20 individual Fish Habitat Partnerships, which focus on improving fish habitat and aquatic communities at regional and local levels. Annually, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides funding and technical assistance to the 20 Fish Habitat Partnerships to implement aquatic conservation projects nationwide. The work of the National Fish Habitat Partnership is also supported by many federal, state, and local agencies as well as regional and national conservation organizations.

Legislative Bill Proposals

National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020 (12/08/2020 Presented to President.)

<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s910/BILLS-116s910enr.pdf>

Tracker:





This bill reauthorizes through FY2024 and revises the National Sea Grant College Program, through which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) supports university-based programs that focus on studying, conserving, and effectively using U.S. coastal resources.

Among other things, the bill requires NOAA to award Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowships. Currently, NOAA has discretion in awarding such fellowships. The fellowships support the placement of graduate students in fields related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources in positions with the executive and legislative branches.

The bill reauthorizes through FY2024 grants for (1) university research on the biology, prevention, and control of aquatic nonnative species; (2) university research on oyster diseases, oyster restoration, and oyster-related human health risks; (3) university research on the biology, prevention, and forecasting of harmful algal blooms; and (4) fishery extension activities conducted by sea grant colleges or sea grant institutes to enhance existing core program funding.

The bill authorizes grants for (1) priority issues identified in the National Sea Grant Program's strategic plan, and (2) university research on sustainable aquaculture techniques and technologies.

[Digital Coast Act \(Senate agreed to House amendment \(12/02/2020\)\)](https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s1069/BILLS-116s1069enr.pdf)
<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s1069/BILLS-116s1069enr.pdf>

Tracker:



This bill provides statutory authority for and revises the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Digital Coast program. (The program currently exists under NOAA to provide data, tools, and training that communities use to manage their coastal resources.)

NOAA must focus on filling data needs and gaps for critical coastal management issues and support continued improvement in existing efforts to coordinate the acquisition and integration of key data sets needed for coastal management.

NOAA may enter into financial agreements and collect fees to carry out the program.

Additionally, NOAA may establish publicly available tools that track ocean and Great Lakes economy data for each coastal state.

[Coordinated Ocean Observations and Research Act of 2020 \(Passed House \(12/03/2020\)\)](https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s914/BILLS-116s914eah.pdf)
<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s914/BILLS-116s914eah.pdf>

Tracker:





This bill reauthorizes through FY2025 and revises the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System (IOOS), which is a network of federal and regional entities that provide information about the nation's coasts, oceans, and Great Lakes, as well as new tools and forecasts to improve safety, enhance the economy, and protect the environment.

The bill revises the authority of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conduct scientific assessments related to storms, including to (1) direct NOAA to seek public input before the Named Storm Event Model (the official meteorological and oceanographic computerized model which utilizes data to replicate the magnitude, timing, and spatial variations of winds, rainfall, and storm surges associated with named storms for which post-storm assessments are conducted) takes effect, and (2) allow NOAA to deploy sensors to areas in coastal states that are at the highest risk of experiencing geophysical events that would cause indeterminate losses.

The bill provides statutory authority for NOAA's National Water Center. (The center currently exists at NOAA as the research and operational center of excellence for hydrologic analyses, forecasting, and related decision support services.)

Additionally, the bill directs the National Weather Service (NWS) to make a policy directive for the National Water Center publicly available. The NWS must also (1) initiate and lead all research and development activities to develop operational water resource prediction and related decision support products, (2) collaborate with relevant state and federal agencies regarding total water prediction, and (3) collaboratively develop capabilities necessary for total water predictive capacity.

Coastal and Great Lakes Communities Enhancement Act (Referred in Senate
(12/12/2019))

<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr729/BILLS-116hr729rfs.pdf>

Tracker:



This bill authorizes the Department of Commerce to award grants to Indian tribes to further achievement of any of the following tribal coastal zone objectives:

protecting, restoring, or preserving areas in the zone that hold important ecological, cultural, or sacred significance for the tribes, or traditional, historic, and esthetic values essential to the tribes; preparing and implementing a special area management plan and technical planning for important coastal areas; and implementing any coastal or shoreline stabilization measure for the purpose of public safety, public access, or cultural or historical preservation.



Driftnet Modernization and Bycatch Reduction Act (Passed Senate (07/22/2020))
<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s906/BILLS-116s906enr.pdf>

Tracker:



This bill addresses certain driftnet fishing. (Driftnet fishing is a method of fishing in which a gillnet composed of a panel or panels of webbing, or a series of such gillnets, is placed in the water and allowed to drift with the currents and winds for the purpose of entangling fish in the webbing.)

Currently, the use of large-scale drift gillnets with a total length of 2.5 kilometers or more is prohibited in the United States. The bill expands the definition of large-scale driftnet fishing to prohibit the use of gillnets with a mesh size of 14 inches or greater. This expanded prohibition does not apply within the U.S. exclusive economic zone for five years.

The Department of Commerce must conduct a transition program to facilitate the phase out of large-scale driftnet fishing and to promote the adoption of alternative fishing practices that minimize the incidental catch of living marine resources.

Commerce must award grants to program participants.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council may recommend and Commerce may approve regulations that require charter operators to pay fees on vessels that harvest Pacific halibut in specific International Pacific Halibut Commission regulatory areas.

Coastal Communities Ocean Acidification Act of 2019 (Passed House (06/05/2019))
<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr1716/BILLS-116hr1716rfs.pdf>

Tracker:



This bill requires the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conduct and update at least once every seven years an ocean acidification coastal community vulnerability assessment with a corresponding public report. The assessment must identify (1) U.S. coastal communities that are most dependent on coastal and ocean resources that may be impacted by ocean acidification; (2) the nature of those communities' vulnerabilities, including the economic impact on local or regional commercial fisheries and recreational opportunities; and (3) key knowledge gaps where research could be devoted to better understand the possible ocean acidification impacts and possible adaptation strategies for the communities.

In carrying out the assessment, NOAA must collaborate with state, U.S. territory, local, and tribal government entities that are conducting or have completed vulnerability assessments, strategic research planning, or other similar activities related to ocean acidification to determine whether those



activities may serve as a model for others and to identify opportunities for federal agencies to support those activities.

Regional Ocean Partnership Act (Introduced in House (12/11/2019))

<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr5390/BILLS-116hr5390ih.pdf>

Tracker:



This bill provides a mechanism for coastal states to participate in a Regional Ocean Partnership with one or more other coastal states that share a common ocean or coastal area.

Specifically, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may designate a partnership as a Regional Ocean Partnership if it (1) is established to coordinate the interstate management of coastal resources; (2) focuses on the environmental issues affecting the ocean and coastal areas of the coastal states participating in the partnership; (3) complements existing state coastal and ocean management efforts on an interstate scale, focusing on shared regional priorities; (4) does not have a regulatory function; and (5) is not duplicative of an existing Regional Ocean Partnership.

A Regional Ocean Partnership may use provided federal funds to award grants and enter into contracts for certain purposes, including to monitor the water quality and living resources of multistate ocean and coastal ecosystems.

OFFSHORE Act of 2020 (Introduced in Senate (03/12/2020))

<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s3485/BILLS-116s3485is.pdf>

Tracker:



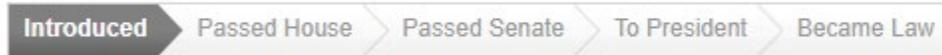
To expand the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to expand revenue sharing for offshore wind, to reauthorize the National Oceans and Coastal Security Act, and for other purposes.

Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture Act (Introduced in House (03/11/2020))

<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr6191/BILLS-116hr6191ih.pdf>



Tracker:



This bill establishes national standards for sustainable offshore aquaculture.

The bill directs the Department of Commerce to create an Office of Offshore Aquaculture within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to coordinate regulatory, scientific, outreach, and international issues related to aquaculture.

The bill also establishes a unified permitting and review process for aquaculture operations.

Commerce must establish a research and development grant program to promote research and extension activities, including to (1) create innovative design and engineering solutions to common obstacles within the aquaculture industry; (2) evaluate the role of genetics in relation to brood stock production, disease management, and interactions between cultured species and wild stocks; and (3) improve techniques for monitoring, assessing, and addressing environmental impacts of aquaculture and develop and evaluate methodologies to prevent, minimize, and mitigate potential adverse environmental impacts.