

Opening Statement
Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC), Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy & Environment
U.S. House of Representatives
A New Direction for Federal Oil Spill Research and Development

June 4, 2009

Good afternoon, and thank you for holding this hearing, Mr. Chairman.

In many ways, this hearing is an opportunity to applaud the progress and success of NOAA, the U.S. Coast Guard, research labs, and environmental organizations at the state, federal, and local level, who have all contributed to a steady decline in oil spill incidents in our nation's past. This achievement is especially noteworthy considering that our annual transport of oil and other hazardous materials is not decreasing, but growing at a rapid pace. So thank you to the witnesses here for your hard work, and the work of those you represent, in protecting our waters, wildlife, and ecological systems in the incidents of spills.

But oil spills are one of those areas where we as a country will stop being worried when we're perfect – and since we'll probably never be perfect, or able to prevent any imaginable accident, we're here to discuss how we can readdress our strategies and resources for mitigating the impacts of oil spills. The 50,000 gallon spill in November 2007 in the San Francisco Bay area was a reminder that even small spills can be very costly. If there are ways that we can be promoting research and development to improve response and cleanup, while driving down the costs of those efforts, we have a responsibility to encourage such changes.

I appreciate Congresswoman Woolsey's proactive efforts to bring draft legislation before this subcommittee, and I look forward to hearing our witnesses' thoughts on this bill. I'm especially interested to hear what deficiencies exist in the current interagency coordination effort, and if new legislation is necessary to correct these shortcomings.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.