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## OCEANS: Lawmakers call on EPA to look at regulations for acidification

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A group of 44 House Democrats is asking U.S. EPA to take a more active role in addressing ocean acidification under the Clean Water Act.

Reps. Lois Capps (D-Calif.), Sam Farr (D-Calif.) and Jay Inslee (D-Wash.) spearheaded the effort to weigh in as EPA considers how to help states address rising acidity in ocean waters.

“The science is clear. Carbon dioxide emissions are causing ocean acidification to progress at an unprecedented rate,” Capps said in a statement yesterday. “I’m glad the EPA is considering using the tools in the Clean Water Act to stop the pollution causing ocean acidification and to improve water quality standards and monitoring.”

Under a settlement reached with environmentalists last March, EPA agreed to look for opportunities to use the Clean Water Act to address ocean acidification. The effort could lead to the first Clean Water Act action to protect acidifying marine waters.

Oceans absorb about a third of the carbon dioxide produced by human activities and are becoming more acidic as they absorb more carbon. Scientists estimate that ocean water is 30 percent more acidic than it was before factories, cars, planes and other uses of fossil fuels became widespread.

Rising acidity is of concern because it threatens marine life. Several scientific studies have suggested that shifting ocean chemistry is particularly dangerous for shellfish, corals and other animals that grow calcium carbonate shells. If water becomes too acidic, it can dissolve those shells, sometimes faster than creatures can rebuild them.

The Center for Biological Diversity sued EPA over its failure to require Washington state to list its marine waters as impaired by rising acidity. EPA agreed in a settle-

ment with the group to work with states to help them identify oceans as “impaired.”

States have taken steps to address rising acidity in lakes and streams, but the settlement represents the first time EPA has agreed to take on ocean acidity. EPA made no commitments beyond working on guidance for states, but environmentalists hope it will open a door for ocean acidification regulations and even curbs on greenhouse gases.

The agency asked for public comment on ocean acidity, ways states can determine if coastal waters are affected, and how states might regulate “total maximum daily loads” of pollutants linked to acidification. Capps and other lawmakers sent a letter to EPA on the issue Friday. The letter is part of the formal public comment on the process.

The House Democrats told EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson that it was the goal of Congress in the Clean Water Act to restore and maintain ocean waters that are vital for fish and wildlife, as well as 2 million jobs in commercial and recreational fishing.

The letter states that EPA can play “an important role” in providing guidance and leadership to address ocean acidification. Guidance from the agency would “fulfill an important need by providing a framework for national and state coordination to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and address the impacts of ocean acidification,” according to the letter.

The letter has support from some House lawmakers in positions that could influence EPA, including Select Committee on Global Warming Chairman Edward Markey (D-Mass.), Oceans Subcommittee Chairwoman Madeleine Bordallo (D-Guam), Rep. Maurice Hinchey, who sits on the spending committee that oversees EPA funding, and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.), a member of House leadership.