UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE Suzanne BONAMICI
1st District of Oregon

BLUE GLOBE Act

Bolstering Long-term Understanding and Exploration of the Great Lakes, Oceans, Bays, and Estuaries Act

America's oceans, Great Lakes, bays, and estuaries are economic engines for coastal and inland communities. According to NOAA and the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the blue economy contributed $511 billion to the American GDP in 2023 and supported 2.6 million jobs. That economy relies on quality ocean data: observations and maps keep ships navigating safely into port, power the forecasts that protect coastal communities from hurricanes and flooding, and inform sustainable fisheries management. What happens in the ocean shapes weather and climate on land.

Yet we still know remarkably little about these waters. As of January 2026, NOAA reports that 44 percent of U.S. ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes waters remain unmapped to modern standards, including 83 percent of the Great Lakes and just one quarter of the global seafloor. The National Academies' 2025 decadal survey of ocean science warned that much of the infrastructure used to study the ocean needs significant upgrades, and that the current replacement strategy is insufficient. Promising new technologies too often stall between the lab and operational use, and federal ocean data remains scattered across agencies.

These gaps shrink the blue economy. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing undercuts American fishermen and depletes global fish stocks. Meanwhile, the U.S. ocean workforce is approaching a cliff. A large share of experienced ocean scientists and technicians are retiring, and fewer students are earning degrees in ocean science disciplines, even as demand grows for workers skilled in ocean engineering, data science, and marine technology.

We must close these gaps and invest in the science, technology, and people needed to understand and protect our ocean and Great Lakes, strengthen coastal economies and communities, and keep the United States at the forefront of ocean innovation.

The *BLUE GLOBE Act* would:

- **Strengthen interagency coordinated ocean observation and mapping** by harmonizing data collection across satellites, buoys, gliders, vessels, and observing platforms, and aligning federal ocean data standards;
- **Make federally funded ocean data open, standardized, and usable** to provide clear licensing terms, commercial procurement policies, and reasonable protections for national security and proprietary information;

- **Deploy cutting-edge technology to combat IUU fishing** through a joint pilot program between the Coast Guard, NOAA, and the State Department to integrate vessel monitoring, satellite radar, environmental DNA, and emerging tools, develop electronic evidence protocols, and partner with regional fisheries bodies and allied nations;
- **Create milestone-based Ocean Innovation Prize Competitions** to catalyze emerging ocean technology research and development to address ocean and coastal challenges, including for autonomous vehicles, environmental DNA analytics, harmful algal bloom detection, plastic pollution mitigation, electronic fisheries monitoring, and coral reef monitoring;
- **Modernize NOAA's ocean observing and mapping programs** by reauthorizing NOAA's hydrographic services programs, creating recapitalization strategy to move proven technologies into operations and replacing aging infrastructure, and requiring regular technology transition plans to sustain ocean equipment performance;
- **Build the next-generation ocean workforce** by establishing an Interagency Advisory Committee on Ocean Workforce Pathways to develop a national ocean workforce strategy, expanding access to paid internships, registered apprenticeships, and short-cycle training programs, developing portable, industry-recognized credentials, and designating five Regional Ocean Workforce Partnerships that connect training directly to employers; and
- **Assess the feasibility of an Advanced Research Projects Agency–Oceans (ARPA-O)** through a National Academies study to examine the need for and design of a DARPA-style agency to pursue high-risk, high-reward ocean technology breakthroughs.