

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY:
The Marine Debris Research and Reduction Act (S. 362)

Introduced by U.S. Senators Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska)
February 10, 2005

OVERVIEW

The bill directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Coast Guard (USCG) to establish programs for the identification of type and source, assessment, reduction, and prevention of marine debris. These programs would be carried out in cooperation with other Federal and non-Federal programs. The bill would also direct NOAA and the USCG to reestablish the Interagency Marine Debris Coordinating Committee, develop a Federal marine debris information clearing house, and work with the international community in order to reduce the problem of marine debris on a global scale.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy recognized marine debris as one of the major threats to our nation's marine resources and to human health and safety along our coasts. However, no Federal program currently exists that deals explicitly with the problem of marine debris. This bill has been drafted in order to address the gap in Federal attention to this serious problem.

Co-sponsors: Senators Cantwell (D-Wash.), Snowe (R-Maine), Kerry (D-Mass.), and Lautenberg (D-N.J.)

KEY PROVISIONS

Establishes Marine Debris Prevention and Removal Program within NOAA: This program will enhance our ability to track and mitigate the effects of marine debris by; 1) creating a catalogue and inventory of debris in all US navigable waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), 2) developing methods to source, track, and project movement of debris, and 3) developing strategies for prevention and removal of debris. These efforts will be coupled with a program to reduce and mitigate the loss of fishing gear through development of new gear types, new gear tracking techniques, and increased incentives and programs for the reporting of lost gear. Finally, the program increases funding for education and outreach of both the general public and the various marine industries on the threats associated. This increase in funds includes a new grant program to provide matching funds for non-Federal entities engaged in marine debris mitigation activities.

Enhances USCG Marine Debris Prevention Efforts: The bill directs the USCG to enhance its monitoring and enforcement of current marine pollution laws under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) and to

generate new regulations as deemed necessary. These new regulations may include strengthening the requirements for ports to provide for the adequate logging and disposal of garbage, enhanced rules for ship logs regarding garbage disposal, and rules requiring lost fishing gear to be reported. The USCG would also be directed to help develop a voluntary reporting program for observed violations of marine debris laws and regulations.

Prescribes Interagency Coordination: The bill would establish an Interagency Committee on Marine Debris (Committee) to coordinate Federal mitigation efforts with non-Federal entities including, but not limited to, non-governmental organizations, state governments, academia, Indian Tribes, and foreign governments. The Committee membership will include, but is not limited to, representatives from NOAA, the USCG, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Navy, the Maritime Administration, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of State, and the Marine Mammal Commission. The committee will be chaired by the representative from NOAA and is tasked with prioritizing and coordinating marine debris mitigation efforts. The Committee will also provide an annual progress report on its efforts to Congress.

Encourages International Cooperation: The Committee will also work with foreign governments to establish regional partnerships for marine debris prevention and to strengthen the existing agreements outlined in MARPOL.

Establishes a Federal Information Clearinghouse of Marine Debris Information: The bill directs the Committee to develop a central clearinghouse of data that will include; 1) standard protocols for mapping fishing and aquaculture efforts; 2) a world wide data base of fishing gear and practices; 3) guidance on identifying gear fragments and their sources; and 4) data on marine debris location. It is intended that this clearinghouse will serve as the basis for the United States' contribution to an international database of marine debris information. The Committee will help develop this database in cooperation with other governments.

Authorizes Funding for the Act: The bill authorizes annual appropriations of \$10 million to NOAA and \$5million to the Department of Homeland Security for the USCG to carry out the requirements of this act through fiscal years 2006-2010.