

Testimony by Representative Mike Thompson (CA-01)

The Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries
Boundary Modification and Protection Act, H.R. 1187

Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans
Committee on Natural Resources

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1324 Longworth House Office Building

Chairwoman Bordallo, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.R. 1187, the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries Boundary Modification and Protection Act. I appreciate the committee's invitation to speak here today on behalf of Representative Woolsey's bill, a bill of which I am a co-sponsor, which would expand the boundaries of the Gulf of Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries to provide protection to the extraordinary marine ecosystem and resources found along the coasts of Sonoma and southern Mendocino Counties.

Madame Chairwoman, as you will hear from scientific experts testifying here this morning, the California Current Coastal Upwelling Ecosystem found off the western coast of the U.S. is the only upwelling region in North America and one of only four upwelling regions on Earth. Expanding the boundaries of the Gulf of Farallones and Cordell Bank Sanctuaries is necessary to ensure part of this upwelling region is permanently protected. The proposed Sanctuaries expansion includes the Point Arena upwelling system which the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has shown consistently contains the most intense upwelling in North America.

Upwelling regions support extremely abundant and productive marine life. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, while upwelling regions make up less than one percent of the world's oceans, they contribute to approximately twenty percent of the world's fish catch. The incredible productivity of the Point Arena upwelling ecosystem sustains growth at all levels of the marine food web along the Northern California coast and southward. Because this upwelling ecosystem is critical to the diverse and abundant local and migratory life found in the Gulf of Farallones and Cordell Bank Sanctuaries and along the North Coast, it is imperative that this area be given special protection to guarantee the unique and invaluable ecosystem and natural resources found off our California coast are protected and enhanced for the future.

I am proud to support HR 1187, which extends a National Marine Sanctuary into my district to just north of Point Arena, because the research clearly demonstrates that this area needs protecting. The designation of National Marine Sanctuaries is an effective vehicle for protecting our coast's resources from offshore oil and gas drilling. Ideally I would like to see the protection Sanctuaries provide from offshore drilling extended along the entire North Coast. Accordingly, I have introduced a bill, H.R. 2758, that would permanently prohibit offshore drilling off the coasts of Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties in my district.

My district comprises the longest coastline of any Congressional district in the continental U.S. and one third of the California coast. It supports some of the largest

populations of salmon south of Alaska - all the more notable since these stocks are at the very southern end of the Pacific salmon range. Rich Dungeness crab fishing grounds, along with rockfish, sole and urchin also support fishing communities tucked along this rugged coast. It's critical that permanent protection be given to this exceptional area along Northern California's coast from the environmental hazards of offshore drilling. Drilling for oil and gas off the Northern Coast of California could cause serious harm to the unique ecosystem and abundant marine life found off the coast, including the fish upon which many local North Coast economies are dependent. Offshore drilling could also harm the thriving North Coast tourism industry which is dependent upon the spectacular views and pristine coves and beaches along the North Coast. In addition, given the rural and rugged nature of the North Coast, the effects of a spill would be particularly disastrous given limited accessibility and the resources readily available for clean-up.

As a result of the unique and incredibly productive ecosystem found within its waters and its renowned natural beauty, Northern California's coast brings biological and economic benefits to our entire country – benefits that warrant protection. An oil spill off our beautiful North Coast would be economically and ecologically disastrous. My bill, combined with H.R. 1187, would provide permanent protection from offshore oil and gas drilling for the entire Northern California coast. I look forward to the mutually beneficial support coastal Congressional members have for each other on this issue to protect one of the last pure and unspoiled places in our country.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my support and the support of my constituents for H.R. 1187. The science shows this bill is necessary. This bill will help make certain the precious resources and ecosystems that are so vital to people and the environment of Northern California are protected and properly managed for the future. I look forward to working with my colleagues to extend such protection to the entire Northern California coast.

I want to thank you Madame Chairwoman for your time and dedication to these issues that are of such great importance to our environment and coastal communities. I look forward to working with the committee in passing this important piece of legislation.