

Our Central Coast district is beautiful and our oceans are critical for so many – surfers, swimmers, fisherman, scientists, students and it's a real boost for bringing tourism dollars into our local economy. Since the tsunami that rocked Japan last year, debris is edging closer and closer to our coast. Already, a 66-foot dock washed ashore in Oregon and an abandoned Japanese fishing boat has been found off the coast of Washington. As more debris heads our way, I am working to coordinate federal and local efforts to keep our ocean clean.

In fact, my own legislation (H.R. 1171) to reauthorize the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Debris program passed the House this month and a companion bill is set to come to the floor in the Senate this fall. Since created in 2006, NOAA's Marine Debris Program has matured and has established strong partnerships with federal, state, NGO's, tribes, and industry. Given that the program expired in 2010, reauthorization will ensure that its activities continue.

While the Japanese tsunami debris resulted from a natural disaster, ocean trash is preventable. Every year 7 million tons of trash ends up in the ocean, costing millions in clean up costs and lost revenue for fisheries and the tourism industry. Local initiatives, such as the plastic bag ban in Santa Cruz; statewide efforts by the Coastal Commission; and federal initiatives, such as those initiated by the Marine Debris Program all support healthy coastal ecosystems and the local economies they support. NOAA's Marine Debris Program is leading the effort to address this growing problem proactively and should be reauthorized.

Keeping our oceans clean, conserving our natural resources and protecting our environment are key issues for me in Congress. You can be assured that I'm working hard to improve our Central Coast.