

# In policy preview, Democrats target oceans for climate action

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House Democrats on Tuesday unveiled broad ocean-themed climate legislation, touting the world's oceans as underappreciated tools to combat rising temperatures.

"Until today, ocean climate solutions have been mostly out of sight and out of mind in the U.S.," said Jane Lubchenco, who led the National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration during the Obama administration.

Lubchenco, now a professor at Oregon State University, said oceans can help mitigate climate change by trapping [greenhouse emissions](#) in so-called blue carbon sources, such as mangroves, marshes and seagrasses. "The bill focuses on the suite of powerful tools that we need to accelerate mitigation and adaptation to climate change."

The bill would ban oil and gas leasing throughout the Outer Continental Shelf, set a national goal of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030, increase funding for NOAA to study [offshore wind](#)–energy development and establish a program at the agency on blue carbon ecosystems, which remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

With two weeks until Election Day, the legislation will almost assuredly not pass the House or become law this Congress. But Democrats made plain they are queuing it up for a push if they regain the Senate majority in January.

"The effort will be made," said Rep. Raul M. Grijalva, D-Ariz., chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, when asked about bipartisan prospects for the legislation. "Willingness is another question," he said. "A lot is going to depend on who's in charge in the Senate."

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, D-Texas, chairwoman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, said she attempted to reach Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and other senators about the legislation with "no positive results."

Grijalva said a committee hearing is expected for the bill, but he did not commit to a markup before the end of the year.

Oceans absorb the vast majority, more than 90 percent, of excess heat due to human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, and global ocean temperatures have increased steadily since the 1990s, according to NOAA figures.

"We all know that the oceans are in trouble and climate change is a major contributor to that trouble," said John Podesta, the former chief of staff to President Bill Clinton and an adviser to the group Climate Power.

Podesta said oceans have historically been viewed as casualties of [climate change](#) during international [climate](#) negotiations rather than solutions. "Warming oceans, restoring blue carbon ecosystems, such as seagrass beds and mangroves, can create jobs and help the [ocean](#) absorb our excess carbon," he added.

Following political tides, President Donald Trump in September issued a temporary ban on offshore oil and gas drilling in Florida, South Carolina and Georgia.

Trump sought to open federal waters in those states to drilling during the first year of his administration but received bipartisan criticism over the move.

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