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Coral Reef Task Force, Public Comment Session, February 24, 2011.

Members of the Coral Reef Task Force and steering committee members:

Good Afternoon.

I am going to start talking to you about dam removal for a second, but I promise to wrap this back to the topic of coral reefs quickly.

On February 11, 2011 Senator John Warner, the retired senior senator from Virginia, having served 30 years in office, wrote an OpEd which he submitted to the Richmond Times Dispatch. The article primarily focused on the need for federal resources to make complex projects move forward, and he did so by referencing the Embrey Dam removal. The Embrey Dam was a derelict structure in Fredericksburg, VA that had been there for some time. It was a complex problem that nobody had been able to move forward on their own, and he, along with a number of agencies, was able to bring together a cast of characters including the Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and both the Army and Air Force, comprised of both active duty and reserve units, and others, and finally finished the project.

One of the points he was trying to make is that with large problems they can't be accomplished at the local level with a number of the environmental challenges we have.

To quote the Senator "Federal assistance can take our local efforts to the next level" in that efforts may begin organically from the bottom, but they need the leveraging effect of the federal government . I think he was particularly concerned about the push back on federal funding and significantly limiting the discretionary budget which would curtail these projects from coming to fruition.

Specifically he said "We would never have succeeded in removing the dam without the support of Congress, and departments of state and federal government," and that is the point of the Op-ed, but I think he was hoping to bring to light that these sorts of projects are inspiring, both to you and to your agencies.

He said "Seeing that dam come down in 2004 was one of the proudest moments of my career in public service" which I think is remarkable as he was the Chairman of Armed Services and he had 30 years in Congress.

I would like you to think about this when you work on the corals topic in terms of thinking about adopting some projects yourself. You can do great work as the broad Coral Reef Task Force, but you should also be trying to step in individually to make some of these happen.

And if you are short of project ideas, I'll throw out a few:

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One is the failed tire reef removal project that up until two years ago a NOAA, Navy, Army, Coast Guard, EPA, Florida DEP and NOVA Southeastern University coalition project which was successful, but with the feds stepping out of the leadership role that project is off the table and going nowhere. A number of you could step forward and try to get that project back on track.

There are the recently mentioned derelict vessel issues in Palmyra and Kingman Reef which are largely Interior projects but which could include a role from the military – possibly from the Navy but perhaps from the Army - and there is [also] a role for EPA dealing with some of the disposal at sea issues. Those are primed and ready but they are waiting for an Administration advocate to get them over the hump. We don't actually need some of the large dollar allocations that have been discussed. We really need some better coordination than has been done in the past, with possibly some fairly trivial amounts of money, in the tens of thousands of dollars, not the hundreds of thousands or half-million that has been suggested in the past. The "I'll just cut a check to the private sector" days are largely over, and now is the time to work on the coalition building that makes projects happen efficiently.

But if you are really interested in process more than projects I'll pitch a couple of things to you on the process front. First I would like to applaud the steering committees efforts to move forward on a results oriented approach, think this is long overdue.

But a number of questions have not been addressed yet.

You have identified in the list of National Ocean Council a number of places you can plug in, but there are a number of projects - like the ones I just mentioned - if you want to walk away from them you call them marine debris projects or ocean disposal projects if you are trying to divert solving these to another group, or you call them coral projects if you want to make them your own.

The question is what is your jurisdiction?

Are you going to actively grab as many projects as you can and be the problem solving group, or will you say no one is giving us direction and telling us to do it, therefore it must be some other group's job. The later process has been going for entirely too long.

I hope you can get excited and try to take on projects without waiting for direction to come from someone else.

For after all while we now have an executive order, and I think it is outstanding that we have an ocean policy that we can all rally around as a nation, it is an Executive Order. But you have a statute – you have a law. And that law has been there for a while. I think you have all the authority you need to go forward now and work on the projects I mentioned and others speakers mentioned, much less a number of things have haven't even been mentioned today - there is a whole catalogue of things for the

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Northwestern Hawaiian Islands that was on the “please help us coordinate these list” at the end of the last Administration, only one of which has been accomplished – the removal of a derelict vessel ff of Kure Atoll – but the rest o f the portfolio is still there for you to coordinate.

If you could, please adopt a few projects, move forward on them, and determine which parts of the puzzle will be yours. Now is the time to move [forward].

I don’t believe we have the luxury of time to wait for the larger [ocean policy implementation] process to be enacted.

Thank you.

An audio recording of these remarks can be found on the web at  
<http://whnuckolsconsulting.com/downloads/audio/NuckolsCRTFtestimonyFeb2011.MP3>

Senator John Warner’s February 11, 2011 op-ed can be found online in a Richmond-Times Dispatch article at  
<http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2011/feb/11/TDOPIN02-warner-protect-virginias-rivers-ar-834873/>

A video interview of Senator Warner describing the Embery Dam removal as “his proudest achievement” during an interview in 2008 can be seen at  
[http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2008/dec/21/john\\_warner\\_on\\_his\\_proudest\\_achievement-ar-93529/](http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/2008/dec/21/john_warner_on_his_proudest_achievement-ar-93529/)