

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2017

Ms. Nikki Martin
President
International Association of Geophysical Contractors
1225 North Loop West
Suite 220
Houston, TX 77008

Dear Ms. Martin:

Thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations oversight hearing on Tuesday, July 18, 2017 to present testimony on "*Examining Impacts of Federal Natural Resources Laws Gone Astray, Part II.*"

Your testimony was extremely helpful in defining the Subcommittee's understanding of the issue and I appreciate the effort you took to prepare and present your testimony. While many questions were asked during the hearing, the Subcommittee has additional questions, attached, for your reply.

Please forward your responses to John Sullivan, Clerk, with the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, at john.sullivan1@mail.house.gov by no later than Tuesday, August 1, 2017. Your assistance in meeting this deadline is requested, as failure to meet it will be noted in the printed transcript.

Once again, thank you for your extensive effort in making this a valuable hearing.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Enclosure

Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Oversight Hearing
1324 Longworth House Office Building
July 18, 2017
10:00a.m.

Oversight Hearing on *“Examining Impacts of Federal Natural Resources Laws Gone Astray, Part II”*

Questions from Rep. Johnson for Ms. Nikki Martin, President, International Association of Geophysical Contractors (IAGC)

1. Under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, anyone wishing to conduct operations that have the potential to result in harm to marine mammals must obtain a permit to authorize incidental take. In your testimony, you characterize the process for obtaining these permits as an extremely long and complicated process, one that has taken years for some companies.
 - a. What accounts for these extreme delays?
 - b. In your opinion, what steps can Congress or agencies take to clear up these unnecessary delays in permitting while continuing to ensure proper protections for marine mammals?
2. I recently introduced a bill, the SEA Act (H.R. 3133), to help correct some of the concerns you express in your testimony and I want to thank you for supporting this effort. As you know, my bill will clarify the permitting process, reducing ambiguity and creating certainty in the application of the MMPA’s legal standards and procedural inefficiency. The *SEA Act* will provide a much-needed common-sense approach to ensure that critical activities and projects such as coastal restoration, offshore energy and mineral exploration and military operations can move forward.
 - a. Do you agree that the SEA Act will bring the MMPA back in line with the original intent of Congress?
 - b. Would you agree that H.R. 3133 will ensure the permitting decisions made by FWS and NMFS will be based on proven science as opposed to being dictated by political whims?
3. Your testimony mentions the role that advocacy groups play in causing delays to the regulatory process under MMPA through litigation. The US Navy has been unnecessarily and regularly obstructed by legal actions from these groups as well.

- a. Would you say these practices are common during the permitting process for most seismic surveyors?
 - b. What effect does this constant litigation have on the regulatory process and overall offshore energy development?
 - c. What effect does it have on the Navy doing their job to protect Americans?
4. It took over 700 days for the previous Administration to make a decision on permitting, and ultimately deny, a permit to conduct seismic surveys to support potential oil and gas development in the Atlantic outer-continental shelf.
 - a. How long did it take to provide a similar permit to conduct seismic surveys to support other activities, such as offshore windfarms, in the same region?
 - b. Are you using the same technology to support offshore windfarms as to support oil and gas development?
5. Many questions were posed regarding seismic operations during the hearing. Is there any additional information you wish to provide the Committee about seismic operations to more fully address those questions?