

House Passes Bill Formalizing Maine's Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System

Wednesday, March 25 2009

Bill cleared for President's signature

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Mike Michaud praised House passage of H.R. 146, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. This bipartisan lands bill is a package of more than 160 bills, many of which have previously passed through the House. Michaud has been a strong supporter of formally authorizing the Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System (GoMOOS). Initiated in 2001, GoMOOS is a pilot program for the national ocean observation system, which provides weather and ocean data important to scientists and fisherman in Maine. H.R. 146 authorizes the national "Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System" (ICOOS), which would permanently authorize and formalize the operations of GoMOOS, which is critical to securing long-term funding for the program.

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"GoMOOS has experienced funding shortfalls over the last several years and currently can only maintain 6 of the 11 buoys monitoring the Gulf of Maine," said Michaud. "I have heard from Mainers who have called my office concerned about this issue. Attendees of the fisherman's forum in Rockport told me just how important they viewed GoMOOS's operations. While this bill does not actually appropriate additional funding, formalizing the program does pave the way for more stable funding in the future."

GoMOOS was the pilot for ocean observing systems and was started in 1999 and became fully operational in 2001. Since then, other regional ocean observation systems have been established and have been competing for the same pot of funding. The bill that passed today, formalizes a national ocean observing system. Currently, the administration is proposing to increase funding from the current level of \$20 million to \$30 million, and to have it fully funded at \$50 million by 2014. Michaud will be pushing hard to make sure that the Congress lives up to these goals. For Fiscal Year 2009, GoMOOS still faces challenges. Michaud's office is currently working with the delegation to explore having other federal agencies that use GoMOOS help sustain its operations during Fiscal Year 2009.

Attempts have been made numerous times over the last eight years to authorize this national ocean observation system which is critical to secure long-term funding. The ICOOS supports national defense, marine commerce, navigation safety, weather, climate, and marine forecasting, public safety, and coastal and marine resource management. For more information on GoMOOS visit their website at <http://www.gomoos.org/>.

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