

117TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 7970

To establish Ocean Innovation Clusters to strengthen the coastal communities and ocean economy of the United States through technological research and development, job training, and cross-sector partnerships, and for other purposes.

---

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 7, 2022

Ms. PINGREE (for herself, Ms. SALAZAR, and Ms. BARRAGÁN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committees on Science, Space, and Technology, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

---

## A BILL

To establish Ocean Innovation Clusters to strengthen the coastal communities and ocean economy of the United States through technological research and development, job training, and cross-sector partnerships, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Ocean Regional Oppor-  
5 tunity and Innovation Act of 2022”.

1 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) BLUE ECONOMY.—The term “Blue Econ-  
4 omy” means the value and impact of sustainable in-  
5 dustries related to the Great Lakes, oceans, bays, es-  
6 tuaries, and coasts on the economy of the United  
7 States, including living resources, marine construc-  
8 tion, marine transportation, offshore energy develop-  
9 ment and siting including for renewable energy, off-  
10 shore mineral production, ship and boat building,  
11 tourism, recreation, subsistence, commercial, rec-  
12 reational, and charter fishing, seafood processing,  
13 and other fishery-related businesses, kelp and shell-  
14 fish aquaculture, coastal resilience, and other indus-  
15 tries the Secretary of Commerce considers appro-  
16 priate.

17 (2) DIRECTOR OF SEA GRANT.—The term “Di-  
18 rector of Sea Grant” means the Director of the Na-  
19 tional Sea Grant College Program appointed under  
20 section 204(d)(1) of the National Sea Grant College  
21 Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(1)).

22 (3) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”  
23 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the  
24 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance  
25 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

1           (4) NATIVE HAWAIIAN ORGANIZATION.—The  
 2           term “Native Hawaiian organization” has the mean-  
 3           ing given the term in section 6207 of the Native Ha-  
 4           waiian Education Act (20 U.S.C. 7517).

5           (5) OCEAN INNOVATION CENTER FOR CROSS-  
 6           SECTOR COLLABORATION.—The term “Ocean Inno-  
 7           vation Center for Cross-Sector Collaboration” means  
 8           a physical space for collaboration developed and  
 9           managed in accordance with section 3(i).

10          (6) OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTER.—The term  
 11          “Ocean Innovation Cluster” means an eligible entity  
 12          designated by the Secretary of Commerce under sec-  
 13          tion 3.

14 **SEC. 3. OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.**

15          (a) DESIGNATION.—Not later than 1 year after the  
 16          date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Com-  
 17          merce, in consultation with the Director of Sea Grant, the  
 18          Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmos-  
 19          phere, and the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Eco-  
 20          nomic Development, shall designate not fewer than 7 eligi-  
 21          ble entities as Ocean Innovation Clusters.

22          (b) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—For purposes of this sec-  
 23          tion, an eligible entity is an entity—

24                  (1) that is composed, in a concentrated geo-  
 25                  graphic region, of 1 or more—

1 (A) business organizations;

2 (B) academic institutions, including  
3 minority- and Tribal-serving institutions;

4 (C) not-for-profit organizations;

5 (D) Federal, State, or local governmental  
6 entities, agencies, or instrumentalities;

7 (E) Indian Tribes; or

8 (F) Native Hawaiian organizations;

9 (2) that is led by a not-for-profit organization;

10 and

11 (3) that works to deliver services in the con-  
12 centrated geographic region where the entity is lo-  
13 cated, enhance collaboration, promote innovation,  
14 and contribute to the equitable and sustainable  
15 growth of the Blue Economy across all sectors.

16 (c) PRIORITY.—In designating entities as Ocean In-  
17 novation Clusters under subsection (a), the Secretary of  
18 Commerce shall prioritize entities with a history of sup-  
19 porting cross-sector growth and development of the Blue  
20 Economy.

21 (d) GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY.—The Secretary of  
22 Commerce shall designate not fewer than 1 Ocean Innova-  
23 tion Cluster under subsection (a) in—

1           (1) each of the regions covered by the 5 re-  
2           gional offices of the National Marine Fisheries Serv-  
3           ice;

4           (2) the Great Lakes region; and

5           (3) the Gulf of Mexico region.

6           (e) CONSIDERATIONS.—In designating an eligible en-  
7           tity as an Ocean Innovation Cluster under subsection (a),  
8           the Secretary of Commerce shall consider the following:

9           (1) The economic development potential of the  
10          coastal community or region in which the entity is  
11          located.

12          (2) The ability of the entity to incorporate and  
13          bring growth and opportunity to broad geographic  
14          areas, including urban, rural, and underserved areas.

15          (3) Whether the entity serves a diverse,  
16          multigenerational, ocean-dependent population con-  
17          sisting of groups with different socioeconomic and  
18          educational attainment levels, industries, and Indian  
19          Tribes.

20          (4) The ability of the entity to cultivate and le-  
21          verage partnerships with private industry, academia,  
22          nongovernmental organizations, Federal, State, and  
23          local governments, and Indian Tribes to collaborate  
24          on shared outcomes.

1           (5) The relative potential for the designation of  
 2           the entity as an Ocean Innovation Cluster to reverse  
 3           a decline, or accelerate growth, in ocean sector jobs.

4           (6) The ability of the entity to carry out  
 5           projects that support economic and climate resilience  
 6           through economic diversification and long-term re-  
 7           covery from natural disasters.

8           (7) The extent, rural and underserved nature,  
 9           and economic underutilization of the coastline and  
 10          ocean area that projects carried out by the entity  
 11          could affect.

12          (f) PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT.—

13           (1) PARTNERSHIP LIAISONS.—

14           (A) DESIGNATION.—The Director of Sea  
 15           Grant, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for  
 16           Oceans and Atmosphere, and the Assistant Sec-  
 17           retary of Commerce for Economic Development  
 18           shall each designate 1 partnership manager  
 19           from within their respective agencies to serve as  
 20           a partnership liaison between each Ocean Inno-  
 21           vation Cluster and Sea Grant, the National  
 22           Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and  
 23           the Economic Development Administration, re-  
 24           spectively.

1 (B) FUNCTION.—Each partnership liaison  
2 designated under subparagraph (A) shall ensure  
3 that Ocean Innovation Clusters—

4 (i) have direct communication with  
5 the agency of the liaison; and

6 (ii) allow for collaboration and align-  
7 ment with Federal objectives in each re-  
8 gion regarding the Blue Economy.

9 (2) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—

10 (A) SECRETARY OF COMMERCE AND PART-  
11 NERSHIP LIAISONS.—The Secretary of Com-  
12 merce shall coordinate with the Director of Sea  
13 Grant, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for  
14 Oceans and Atmosphere, the Assistant Sec-  
15 retary of Commerce for Economic Development,  
16 the Department of Energy, the Maritime Ad-  
17 ministration of the Department of Transpor-  
18 tation, the Environmental Protection Agency,  
19 the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management of  
20 the Department of the Interior, the Department  
21 of Agriculture, the Coast Guard, and such other  
22 Federal agencies, including bureaus of the De-  
23 partment of Commerce, as the Secretary of  
24 Commerce considers appropriate to increase  
25 technical knowledge exchange and opportunities

1           for cross-sector collaboration with those agen-  
2           cies.

3           (B) SECRETARY OF ENERGY.—With re-  
4           spect to matters relating to the nexus of the  
5           Blue Economy and the responsibilities and ex-  
6           pertise of the Department of Energy, the Sec-  
7           retary of Energy—

8                   (i) shall provide advice and rec-  
9                   ommendations to the Secretary of Com-  
10                  merce in order to increase technical knowl-  
11                  edge exchange and opportunities for cross-  
12                  sector collaboration; and

13                   (ii) may provide such advice and rec-  
14                   ommendations without any formal request  
15                  from the Department of Commerce.

16       (g) DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC IMPACT METRICS  
17       OF OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.—The Administrator  
18       of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
19       the Director of the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the  
20       Department of Commerce, and the heads of other relevant  
21       Federal agencies shall use and refine the Marine Economy  
22       Satellite Account to measure the value to and impact of  
23       Ocean Innovation Clusters on the Blue Economy.

24       (h) AREAS OF FOCUS.—The Director of Sea Grant,  
25       the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and At-



1 mosphere, and the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for  
2 Economic Development shall coordinate with each Ocean  
3 Innovation Cluster in the following areas of focus:

4           (1) Increasing pathways for new entrants into  
5           the Blue Economy for individuals and entities.

6           (2) Intellectual property management.

7           (3) Enhancing the sustainability of seafood sup-  
8           ply chains, including with respect to food, transpor-  
9           tation, processing, health and beauty products, ani-  
10          mal feed, medical biotechnology, bioplastics, biofuels,  
11          and other value-added products, to strive for full use  
12          of harvested natural resources.

13          (4) Providing significant and sustainable eco-  
14          nomic opportunity through advanced research, cross-  
15          sector science, and technology development.

16          (5) Contributing new knowledge, processes,  
17          technology, and support for stakeholders in the Blue  
18          Economy, especially to advance sustainability in spe-  
19          cific sectors.

20          (6) Working with Federal, State, local, and  
21          Tribal agencies to clearly communicate laws, regula-  
22          tions, and agency practices affecting industry needs,  
23          planning, or growth opportunities.

24          (7) Creating investable opportunities through  
25          the development of economies of scale to enhance

1 growth opportunities, job creation, sustainability,  
2 and expansion for small businesses within the Blue  
3 Economy.

4 (8) Workforce development and training, busi-  
5 ness planning, identifying existing and needed tech-  
6 nology and economic infrastructure, and coordinated  
7 research and development among small businesses,  
8 government, and industry.

9 (9) Research, development, and implementation  
10 of ocean energy, bioprospecting, and other innovative  
11 and sustainable ocean resource development endeav-  
12 ors.

13 (i) OCEAN INNOVATION CENTERS FOR CROSS-SEC-  
14 TOR COLLABORATION.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—In order to foster collabora-  
16 tion and innovation and strengthen regional ocean  
17 sector economies while creating employment oppor-  
18 tunities, the Director of Sea Grant, the Assistant  
19 Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere,  
20 and the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Eco-  
21 nomic Development shall collaborate with cross-sec-  
22 tor partners to jointly develop or designate at least  
23 1 physical space for collaboration as an Ocean Inno-  
24 vation Center for Cross-Sector Collaboration within

1 each of the 7 regions with an Ocean Innovation  
2 Cluster.

3 (2) MANAGEMENT.—An Ocean Innovation Clus-  
4 ter or a group of Ocean Innovation Clusters shall  
5 manage the Ocean Innovation Center for Cross-Sec-  
6 tor Collaboration of the region in which the Cluster  
7 or Clusters is located.

8 (3) FUNCTIONS.—Each Ocean Innovation Cen-  
9 ter for Cross-Sector Collaboration shall—

10 (A) serve as a hub for partners within  
11 Ocean Innovation Clusters to work toward the  
12 areas of focus in described in subsection (h);

13 (B) support a community of entrepreneurs  
14 focused on strengthening vibrant marine-de-  
15 pendent communities and the Blue Economy;

16 (C) create workspaces and laboratories de-  
17 signed to promote collaboration, including  
18 through shared meeting rooms, access to tech-  
19 nology, common spaces, and offices;

20 (D) strengthen relationships among indus-  
21 try sectors through shared scientific, staffing,  
22 and business resources;

23 (E) develop the critical networks with  
24 cross-sector partners that entrepreneurs need to  
25 grow effectively; and

1 (F) develop the next generation of Blue  
2 Economy workers by providing internships, ap-  
3 prenticeships, or training, as appropriate, in-  
4 cluding for underrepresented and Tribal com-  
5 munities and local trade schools.

6 **SEC. 4. GRANTS FOR OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.**

7 The Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of  
8 1980 (15 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.) is amended by adding at  
9 the end the following:

10 **“SEC. 29. GRANTS FOR OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTERS.**

11 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in consultation  
12 with the Director of Sea Grant, the Assistant Secretary  
13 of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and the Assist-  
14 ant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development,  
15 may award grants, on a competitive basis, to Ocean Inno-  
16 vation Clusters for the purposes described in subsection  
17 (b).

18 “(b) PURPOSES.—The Secretary may award grants  
19 under subsection (a) for—

20 “(1) the operation and administration of one or  
21 more Ocean Innovation Clusters under the Ocean  
22 Regional Opportunity and Innovation Act of 2022,  
23 with the goal that Ocean Innovation Clusters will be-  
24 come membership-based, self-sustaining entities; and

1           “(2) one-time capital investments made by one  
2           or more Ocean Innovation Clusters necessary—

3                   “(A) to establish one or more Ocean Inno-  
4           vation Centers for Cross-Sector Collaboration;  
5           and

6                   “(B) to foster cross-sector collaboration  
7           within Ocean Innovation Cluster regions.

8           “(c) INPUT.—In awarding a grant under subsection  
9   (a), the Secretary shall provide an opportunity for input  
10   from the Director of Sea Grant, the Assistant Secretary  
11   of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and the Assist-  
12   ant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development.

13          “(d) TERM OF GRANTS.—

14               “(1) OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION.—

15                   “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term of a grant  
16           awarded under subsection (a) for a purpose de-  
17           scribed in subsection (b)(1) shall be 2 years.

18                   “(B) RENEWAL.—The Secretary may  
19           renew a grant described in subparagraph (A)  
20           for additional periods of such duration as the  
21           Secretary determines to be appropriate and nec-  
22           essary for the Ocean Innovation Cluster that  
23           received the grant to provide regional economic  
24           benefits.

1           “(2) CAPITAL INVESTMENT.—The term of a  
2           grant awarded under subsection (a) for a purpose  
3           described in subsection (b)(2) shall be for a period  
4           determined to be appropriate by the Secretary.

5           “(e) GRANTS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE.—Any grant  
6           awarded under subsection (a) to support the construction  
7           of facilities, upgrades to existing facilities, or site  
8           connectivity infrastructure shall be awarded pursuant to  
9           section 201 of the Public Works and Economic Develop-  
10          ment Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3141) and subject to the  
11          provisions of such Act, except that subsection (b) of such  
12          section and sections 204 and 301 of such Act (42 U.S.C.  
13          3144, 3161) shall not apply.

14          “(f) LIMITATIONS ON GRANT AMOUNTS.—

15                 “(1) OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION.—A  
16                 grant awarded under subsection (a) for a purpose  
17                 described in subsection (b)(1) may not exceed  
18                 \$10,000,000.

19                 “(2) CAPITAL INVESTMENT.—A grant awarded  
20                 under subsection (a) for a purpose described in sub-  
21                 section (b)(2) may not exceed \$10,000,000.

22          “(g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
23          is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to award  
24          grants under subsection (a) \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal  
25          years 2023 through 2028.

1 “(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

2 “(1) DIRECTOR OF SEA GRANT.—The term ‘Di-  
3 rector of Sea Grant’ means the Director of the Na-  
4 tional Sea Grant College Program appointed under  
5 section 204(d)(1) of the National Sea Grant College  
6 Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(1)).

7 “(2) OCEAN INNOVATION CLUSTER; OCEAN IN-  
8 NOVATION CENTER FOR CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORA-  
9 TION.—The terms ‘Ocean Innovation Cluster’ and  
10 ‘Ocean Innovation Center for Cross-Sector Collabo-  
11 ration’ have the meanings given those terms in sec-  
12 tion 2 of the Ocean Regional Opportunity and Inno-  
13 vation Act of 2022.”.

○