

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 6, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
410 Dirksen Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

We are writing to you regarding the climate change legislation that will be considered in the Environment and Public Works Committee in September. We want to highlight one of our shared priorities for this legislation -- natural resource adaptation.

Climate adaptation generally is the set of actions that will need to be taken to prepare for, respond to, and reduce the effects of climate change. The 2007 IPCC Fourth Assessment Report stated, "Even the most stringent mitigation efforts cannot avoid further impacts of climate change in the next few decades, which makes adaptation essential, particularly in addressing near-term impacts." These effects will be realized in the natural as well as the built environment. Impacts in the natural environment can have direct and indirect effects on human populations.

In Montana, for example, thinner snowpack as a result of climate change will reduce stream flows, which, combined with higher air temperatures, will cause streams to warm, decreasing their quality for trout, closing rivers to fishing and affecting the state's multi-million dollar tourism industry. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks has already identified the Yellowstone River as a site where water temperature increases are impacting trout habitat. An example of a natural resource adaptation project to reduce this effect could be restoring tree cover in streamside corridors to provide shade, keeping water temperatures cool.

In Rhode Island, the impacts of climate change have also already begun to manifest themselves. The Ocean state's historic fishing industry has suffered the impacts of gradually warming waters in Narragansett Bay, leading to an ecosystem shift in that has begun to replace valuable cold water species, such as winter flounder, with less valuable, warmer water species, such as scup. Furthermore, more frequent and intense storms in recent years have begun to erode the Rhode Island coastline, undermining the integrity of the natural barriers that protect important coastal infrastructure. Likewise, the increasing absorption of carbon dioxide by our oceans is causing the ocean to become more acidic. Ocean acidification may be one of the most severe manifestations of climate change, and its effects are still largely unknown. Resources to help

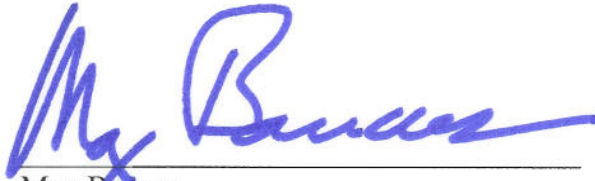
plan and prepare for these multitude of impacts in Rhode Island, Montana, and across the nation are desperately needed.

We have attached legislative language establishing a natural resource adaptation program. We request that this language be included in any broader EPW Committee legislation addressing climate change. The draft language would establish planning requirements and identify specific federal and state programs through which natural resource adaptation would be undertaken. The proposed legislation would require the development of a coordinated national adaptation strategy and state-specific adaptation plans that would guide spending decisions to ensure these dedicated resources are utilized as effectively as possible. It is similar to the language in both the Lieberman-Warner bill passed by the EPW Committee in June 2008 and the Waxman-Markey bill passed by the House of Representatives earlier this year. The proposal also has the support of the full community of sportsmen, conservation, and environmental groups. We urge your full support and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator



Max Baucus
U.S. Senator