

# Opinion: Need to create an oceans policy

By David Helvarg, Sierra

Thirty-three years ago, President Ronald Reagan established the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), stretching 200 miles out from our shores. At 3.4 million square miles, it's more extensive than our continental landmass.

But unlike our lands, our public seas belong to all of us, and right now they are in trouble. The ocean is at risk from a cascading series of environmental disasters including industrial overfishing, pollution, loss of coastal and offshore habitats, and climate change.

Faced with these threats, it's hard to fathom why this crisis in our seas has received no attention in the 2016 presidential campaigns. Hillary Clinton has pledged not to drill for oil in the Arctic Ocean or off the Atlantic coast but has no position on the Gulf of Mexico, where 17 percent of domestic oil production takes place. By calling the science of climate change a hoax, Donald Trump has made it clear that he'd be unlikely to address climate-linked ocean threats such as sea level rise, ocean acidification, and harmful algae blooms intensified by warming ocean waters—such as we're now seeing on the coasts of Florida.

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