Mr. Fugate's work on the ocean SAMP and Northeast Regional Planning Body has placed Rhode Island at the forefront of ocean planning and offshore wind development. He is a leader with a passion and commitment to protecting ocean and coastal resources. His technical expertise, ability to foster good working relationships with key stakeholders, and talent for finding solutions within the existing regulatory framework are a few of the many reasons I wish today to recognize him.

TRIBUTE TO CURT SPALDING

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize a notable Rhode Islander. Curt Spalding, the outgoing Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's region 1, is retiring this year. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to protecting our environment.

The iconic waters of New England are part of what make this region a very special place to live. Since taking the helm of EPA region 1 in 2009, Administrator Spalding has worked to bolster coastal resilience, clean our lakes and rivers, and improve New England communities through innovation and science. Among his priorities was renewing the region's focus on bettering stormwater pollution control, a particular concern for Rhode Island's coastal communities as they prepare for sea level rise and increased rainfall. His focus on stakeholder engagement led to EPA's first-ever, real-time water quality reporting tool, which relies on New England citizen scientists, professional researchers, and a myriad of other groups for data and outreach.

Administrator Spalding has routinely been a leader identifying innovative and cooperative solutions to difficult problems. He worked with Senator REED and me to establish the Southeastern New England Coastal Watershed Restoration Program, SNEP. SNEP, a collaboration between government agencies, researchers, and nongovernmental organizations, works to protect and restore coastal watersheds by addressing the excess nutrients and other pollutants that undermine water quality in the region. So far SNEP has made available over $12 million to improve coastal water quality, restore coastal ecosystems, and address nutrient pollution.

Administrator Spalding has also championed programs to clean the waters of Cape Cod and restore Lake Champlain, and his work in Boston Harbor is another national success story, turning one of the most toxic harbors in the country in the 1980s into one of the cleanest urban beaches in the Nation today.

Prior to serving with region 1, Administrator Spalding was the executive director of Rhode Island's Save the Bay for nearly two decades. While executive director, he oversaw construction of the Save the Bay Center at Fields Point in Providence, RI. The center, which won the Phoenix Award for brownfields redevelopment, transformed a former landfill into a landmark facility that provides classroom spaces for Save the Bay's educational programs and serves as a living example of the organization's approach to environmentally friendly shoreline development. Under his leadership, Save the Bay grew into a nationally recognized, 20,000-member environmental advocacy and education organization.

Administrator Spalding's passion for his work and the environment is obvious. His vision for a vibrant, resilient New England had shaped the great work of our region's environmental and coastal communities for the last three decades. I hope during his retirement Administrator Spalding finds the time to enjoy some of the very areas he has spent a career protecting.

Curt, my friend, may the wind always be at your back.

REMEMBERING BENJAMIN CHARLES STEELE

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have the statement I previously delivered about the life of Benjamin Charles Steele printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

BENJAMIN CHARLES STEELE, BILLINGS, MT

I rise to honor the life of an exceptional Montanan and a true American hero, Benjamin Charles Steele. He passed away on Sunday, September 25 in Billings, surrounded by his loving family. He was 98.

Ben was born on November 17, 1917, in Roundup, MT. He was 22 when he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in Missoula, MT, on September 9, 1940. A year later, assigned to serve in the Philippines, he arrived in-country and was promptly handed a rifle and told: ''now you're in the infantry.'' Then, 10 hours after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese invaded the Philippines. A few weeks later, Ben's unit was ordered to the Bataan Peninsula. Soon after, Ben's unit was captured, and he and his fellow soldiers began the infamous Bataan Death March. Ben was a prisoner for 3.5 years and was sent to Japan where he did hard labor in the Japanese mines. He was liberated once the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, with Ground Zero less than 80 miles from Ben's coal mine.

Ben was discharged from the U.S. Air Force on July 10, 1946. After beginning his art career drawing on the concrete floor of a prison in the Philippines, Ben pursued a formal art education. In 1955, he received a master's degree in art from the University of Denver and then taught art at Montana State University-Billings.

Up until his final days, Ben continued to paint, even while fighting his final battle in a nursing home in Billings. Ben Steele never requested any acclaim for his service, but he deserves recognition for his incredible courage in the face of daunting odds.

Ben's life story and legacy will be forever remembered across Montana, and on the west end of Billings, a middle school is currently being constructed that will bear his name.

Ben is survived by his wife, Shirley, and their two daughters, Julie Jorgenson and Rosemarie Steele. He will be remembered by a grateful State and Nation for his brave service in our time of greatest need.

TRIBUTE TO MICHELE CRAIG

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a dedicated public servant and advocate for the people of West Virginia, Michele P. Craig, on her retirement. Ms. Craig stepped down from her role as executive director of KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission and Region II Planning and Development Council on July 1. Her 30 years of service have benefited the State of West Virginia and the Huntington area.

Michelle received a bachelor's degree in economics from Queens College in Charlotte before completing graduate work at West Virginia University and American University. After beginning her career in Washington, she returned home after losing her father in the Marshall University plane crash of 1970 and began working in the family business. During this time, she also served in the West Virginia House of Delegates from 1973 through 1978.

In 1986, Michele went to work for Region II Planning and Development Council; within a year, she became executive director. During her tenure, Michele oversaw a staff that grew from 4 to 13 individuals, serving Cabell, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, Mingo, and Wayne Counties. I have had the pleasure of working with Michele and her staff on numerous projects benefiting the citizens of West Virginia. Her wealth of knowledge, professional expertise, and poise were integral to these accomplishments. My staff and I will miss Michele as she moves on, but she has left behind a strong foundation for the future.

Aside from her role as executive director, Michele has served her community through several organizations, including the Prestera Foundation, Ronald McDonald House, and Hospice of Huntington. She is also an avid reader, gardener, and world traveler. Michele is married to Thomas L. Craig, and together, they have three children.

I wish Michele all the best as she spends more time with her children and grandchildren, enjoying her favorite activities and continuing her philanthropic endeavors and service to the Huntington area. Throughout her career, she has made a positive difference in the lives of many West Virginians. It has been an honor working with her, and it is an honor to call her my friend and fellow West Virginian. I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring her service.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO WANDA DRAPER

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, a fellow Baltimorean and dear friend of mine, Wanda Queen Draper, is retiring today