

**Coordinate and Support:  
Public Comments Received 1/24/2011-4/29/2011**

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**Name**

Robert Alvarez

**Organization**

USMC

**Which Priority Objective would you like to provide comment on?**

Coordinate and Support

**What near-term, mid-term, and long-term actions would most effectively help the Nation achieve this policy objective?**

There must be a well-developed plan in place prior to implementation. Once the plan has been published and the plan must be flexible enough to make changes to areas that are not working and use more of the ideas that are working effectively. In the long-term, there must be a plan for sustainment of the policy. Even after the good-feeling of helping the environment wears off, there must be measures in place to continue the policy.

**What are some of the major obstacles to achieving this objective; are there opportunities this objective can further, including transformative changes in how we address the stewardship of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes?**

Obstacles to this plan is having the population buy-in to protecting the oceans and water ways. In changes in old ways is painful and difficult to show people that it will benefit everyone. Change does not always show immediate effects. In the long run, there will be jobs created and will allow for new ideas to come about. Everything from new forms of energy to new ways to help with waste management. Stewardship is an ongoing process, not a one-time rally.

**What milestones and performance measures would be most useful for measuring progress toward achieving this priority objective?**

There has to be a baseline to determine how polluted or show the erosion of the coast lines. This should be agreed upon by everyone. Not just the policy makers. If the citizens have a say so then the buy in is greater. This does not give us the ability to make the process slow. There has to be consequences to not achieving a minimum result. It does not always have to involve money. If achievements are made, there must be a reward system and a way to use what is working in those areas into areas that are not keeping pace.

**Name**

Sarah Cooksey

**Organization**

MARCO

**Which Priority Objective would you like to provide comment on?**

Coordinate and Support

**What near-term, mid-term, and long-term actions would most effectively help the Nation achieve this policy objective?**

When the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia created the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), they identified the following long term regional priorities for shared action to improve ocean health:

1. HABITATS: Protect important habitats and sensitive and unique offshore areas on a regional scale.
2. RENEWABLE ENERGY: Advance the sustainable development of offshore renewable energy.
3. WATER QUALITY: Promote improvements in the region's coastal water quality.
4. CLIMATE CHANGE: Prepare the region's coastal communities for adaptation to climate change on ocean and coastal resources.

MARCO recently finalized 2011-2012 Work Plans and convened Work Groups for each of its four priorities, as well as for coastal and marine spatial planning. The Work Plans outline near-term, feasible activities that can be accomplished over the next two years with current state resources and anticipated federal agency contributions.

The National Ocean Council (NOC) could support MARCO's priorities and our contributions to the NOC policy priorities by: systematically collecting and providing information on federal capacities that complement MARCO's regional priorities, including funding, data, expertise, and programs.

**What are some of the major obstacles to achieving this objective; are there opportunities this objective can further, including transformative changes in how we address the stewardship of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes?****What milestones and performance measures would be most useful for measuring progress toward achieving this priority objective?**

**Name**

Peter Saundry

**Organization**

National Council for Science and the Environment

**Which Priority Objective would you like to provide comment on?**

Coordinate and Support

**What near-term, mid-term, and long-term actions would most effectively help the Nation achieve this policy objective?**

To improve coordination, support and integration across Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes, the Federal Government should:

- A. Develop an Oceans and Climate Change Initiative led by the Department of Interior (DOI) to coordinate agency activities to collectively and collaboratively manage the 1.76 billion acres of marine area under DOI jurisdiction.
- B. Establish a national committee on marine biodiversity to set national goals and objectives.
- C. Develop mechanisms that support cross-sector and regional networking.
- D. Establish, with Cabinet level leadership, research priorities and policy regarding coastal and ocean carbon sequestration (e.g. establish an SOST working group, include in White House Council of Environmental Quality guidelines, and include in the National Ocean Policy). This should include:
  - i. coordinated U.S. federal research and policy regarding coastal and ocean carbon sequestration,
  - ii. developing comprehensive ocean carbon science programs that examine the fate of carbon from watersheds to the open ocean.
- E. Lead increased coordination among international, Federal, state and local agencies, academic institutions, and others to enhance capacity for detecting, responding to, and managing invasive species. This should include:
  - i. Establish an invasive species “czar” at NOAA to coordinate this issue, and others related to invasive species, with other agencies.
  - ii. Developing an international agreement for the management of pathways and to disseminate information on the risks and impacts from invasive species.
  - iii. Developing a national strategy for monitoring, detecting early, and rapidly responding to biological invasions.
- F. Ensure interoperability of existing data systems, for example, IOOS, OBIS, MMC, NAMERA, National Atlas of Ecosystem Services
- G. Increase, under BOEM leadership, support for education on renewable ocean energy sources at all levels and promote communication between involved groups.
- H. Strengthen, under BOEM leadership, interagency collaboration to standardize the siting and permitting processes to the degree possible and to make the overall process easier and faster.

**What are some of the major obstacles to achieving this objective; are there opportunities this objective can further, including transformative changes in how we address the stewardship of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes?**

**What milestones and performance measures would be most useful for measuring progress toward achieving this priority objective?**

**Attachment:** Attachment included in index: “National Council for Science and the Environment’s 11th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment: Our Changing Oceans: (3 pages).” Found on page 9 of document.

**Name**

William Nuckols

**Organization**

W.H. Nuckols Consulting

**Which Priority Objective would you like to provide comment on?**

Coordinate and Support

**What near-term, mid-term, and long-term actions would most effectively help the Nation achieve this policy objective?**

A focus on projects which make a tangible impact on the nation and its resources, rather than a focus on process is long overdue.

It is time to put the org charts aside and focus on clear ways that decisions will be made, particularly on projects whose nature means they cross multiple agencies and often multiple levels of government.

At this point it isn't even clear what the process is for solving impediments to project success. Is it meant to be a bottom-up exercise where things start in the regions, then get elevated to DC and then in extreme cases to the EOP? Is the pathway of NEPA decisions currently optimized and able to serve as a model if we are looking to make regular and systematic improvements compared to the status quo? Empirical evidence would make that seem unlikely.

Coordinate, as it is implemented in too many cases, means get-togethers where people compare notes on what they are up to individually and then sometimes think about working together if they happen to be doing the same or similar things. That means that at best we are looking to optimize the output from a system which puts funding oftentimes in locations which are not optimal if you are looking for efficiencies or effectiveness of programs.

We need to move coordinate to a point that is synonymous with plan, and plan must include robust and deliberative budget planning.

I realize that true budget crosscut planning efforts are difficult, time consuming, and often times resisted by the agencies and/or OMB. This is not a political party problem, as this has been the case over a number of administrations. It is a problem with the system. So perhaps a first step, if theme based budget planning isn't yet an operational possibility in the executive side of government, then theme based joint budget presentations would be possible. Such joint budget presentations would bring together items from multiple lines in the President's budget which cover an overlapping theme, but which cross over multiple agencies and/or multiple authorizing committees and appropriations subcommittees on Capitol Hill. While Congress would be working on setting budgets based on the improved sense of the interrelationship of certain budget lines to others, hopefully generating some efficiencies that would result in cost savings or increased effectiveness for the same budget expenditure, the Executive could use that same information as the basis for true budget crosscut planning for future FYs.

**What are some of the major obstacles to achieving this objective; are there opportunities this objective can further, including transformative changes in how we address the stewardship of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes?**

If you are looking to include "State, tribal, local, and regional" organizations in this effort for systems improvements (in the previously section I am promoting improvements in the executive rather than other groups, as that is a significantly huge task on its own) then anyone who conducts a quick but accurate analysis of state budgets and political issues means that you will quickly understand that participation by "State, tribal, local, and regional"

organizations will be spotty at best unless travel costs to regional and national dialogues are underwritten by sponsoring federal agencies. Simply put, due to official travel restrictions put in place due to politics, or simple financial short falls, states and tribes will have a very difficult time engaging fully in regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.

In a number of cases federal agencies will either need to pay their way for outside groups to participate, or simply recognize that regional participation will be limited, and simply move forward.

**What milestones and performance measures would be most useful for measuring progress toward achieving this priority objective?**

**Index:**  
**Attachments to Comments**  
**And Letters Received**  
**Pertaining to Coordinate and Support**



**Comments for the National Ocean Policy Strategic Action Plans  
from the  
National Council for Science and the Environment's  
11th National Conference on Science, Policy and the Environment:  
Our Changing Oceans**

For three days in January 2011, the National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE) convened 1,250 leaders in ocean science, policy, management and education, conservation and business to explore issues affecting the world's changing oceans. Their objectives were to advance science based decision-making on oceans by:

1. sharing the most current state of the science;
2. linking science to policy and other decisions;
3. communicating key messages and reframing issues;
4. developing targeted and actionable recommendations; and,
5. catalyzing long-term collaborations

Meeting participants put forth a spectrum of ideas on specific challenges facing the world's oceans. Here we present those recommendations that are germane to the National Ocean Policy process, mapped onto the nine Priority Objectives from the Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force. Recommendations that were not targeted for the National Ocean Policy Strategic Action Plans (e.g., recommendations directed at Congress or the private sector) are not included here.

Because there is considerable overlap among these priority areas, some recommendations are included in more than one area, but we also encourage those working on individual priorities to view recommendations in related areas (for example, ecosystem-based management is very much connected with marine and spatial planning).

Because of the nature of the conference, there is considerable diversity in the types of ideas put forth - research, policy, education and outreach; regional, national and international; single agency, multi-agency and public-private partnerships. There is also considerable diversity in the budgetary implications of the recommendations. We recognize that the current budgetary situation places considerable constraints on the NOC process; constraints that may limit that ability of the government to implement some excellent ideas contained in this document. We ask you to be a forward looking as possible in considering the recommendations included here and "do your best."

In addition to the nine priority areas, we encourage the National Ocean Council to develop sets of cross-cutting recommendations in the areas of education (including public education, and pre-professional STEM and workforce education as well as attention to diversity of those knowledgeable about the oceans) and science (inventory and monitoring, observations, and fundamental and applied research). We are concerned that without such cross-cuts, the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to ocean and coastal education and research, is not likely to be addressed.

We also encourage cross-cutting looks at particular issues such as the importance of oceans for human health and well-being and energy – both traditional (oil and gas) and alternative (wind and waves).

These recommendations are presented in spirit of constructive suggestions from the conference participants. Not all of the conference participants endorse all of the recommendations, and no recommendation should be interpreted as official input from the organizations where conference participants work. For additional information about the conference please go to [www.OurChangingOceans.org](http://www.OurChangingOceans.org).

We hope that you find this input helpful. We would be pleased to meet with the members of the National Ocean Council and your various teams and to assist in other ways.

Best wishes and success with your important work.

Margaret Leinen  
Conference Chair

Peter Saundry  
Executive Director

#### **Priority Area 4. Coordinate and Support**

To improve coordination, support and integration across Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes, the Federal Government should:

- A. Develop an Oceans and Climate Change Initiative led by the Department of Interior (DOI) to coordinate agency activities to collectively and collaboratively manage the 1.76 billion acres of marine area under DOI jurisdiction.
- B. Establish a national committee on marine biodiversity to set national goals and objectives.
- C. Develop mechanisms that support cross-sector and regional networking.
- D. Establish, with Cabinet level leadership, research priorities and policy regarding coastal and ocean carbon sequestration (e.g. establish an SOST working group, include in White House Council of Environmental Quality guidelines, and include in the National Ocean Policy). This should include:
  - i. coordinated U.S. federal research and policy regarding coastal and ocean carbon sequestration,
  - ii. developing comprehensive ocean carbon science programs that examine the fate of carbon from watersheds to the open ocean.
- E. Lead increased coordination among international, Federal, state and local agencies, academic institutions, and others to enhance capacity for detecting, responding to, and managing invasive species. This should include:
  - i. Establish an invasive species “czar” at NOAA to coordinate this issue, and others related to invasive species, with other agencies.
  - ii. Developing an international agreement for the management of pathways and to disseminate information on the risks and impacts from invasive species.
  - iii. Developing a national strategy for monitoring, detecting early, and rapidly responding to biological invasions.

- F. Ensure interoperability of existing data systems, for example, IOOS, OBIS, MMC, NAMERA, National Atlas of Ecosystem Services
- G. Increase, under BOEM leadership, support for education on renewable ocean energy sources at all levels and promote communication between involved groups.
- H. Strengthen, under BOEM leadership, interagency collaboration to standardize the siting and permitting processes to the degree possible and to make the overall process easier and faster.

**Objective 4: Coordinate and Support: Better coordinate and support Federal, State, Tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Improve coordination and integration across the Federal Government and, as appropriate, engage with the international community.**

- *Build on Existing Partnerships:* Coordinate among agencies to build on existing regional partnerships.
- *Funding:* Provide sufficient funding to advance coordination within individual states or regions.
- *Federal Agency Commitment:* Make specific and long-term program commitments to implement this new federal ocean policy to achieve the intended policy objectives.
- *Involvement of Tribes:* Assist states or regions in efforts to involve and coordinate with tribes on a government-to-government basis.

We are pleased that the NOP is focusing on the critical issues of coordination and support at all levels of government. We believe that the WCGA, as well as other partnership organizations, such as the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the Pacific Coast Collaborative, and the British Columbia/Pacific States Oil Spill Task Force, provide excellent examples of such coordination and support. These efforts all work to coordinate the needs of three states (and, in some cases, British Columbia), federal agencies, and many stakeholders from local governments, academic institutions, industry, and the public. Each state has a federally approved CZM Program, ocean management organizations—such as California’s Ocean Protection Council, the Oregon’s Ocean Policy Advisory Council, Washington’s Puget Sound Partnership and State Ocean Caucus groups—and a variety of important academic, industry, and non-governmental resources from which to draw. Hopefully, we can build on those existing partnerships as much as possible. Unfortunately, the call for advancing the National Ocean Policy comes at a time when there are significant federal and state budget limitations.

Federal agencies will need to make specific and long-term program and financial commitments to implement this new federal ocean policy to achieve the intended policy objectives through individual states and regions. Although the states have continued to improve engagement and communication with the tribes and tribal communities on the West Coast, the federal government will need to assist states or regions in efforts to involve and coordinate with tribes. It will be important for the federal government to initiate this coordination with tribal nations on a government-to-government basis.

#### **4. Coordinate and Support: Better coordinate and support Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Improve coordination and integration across the Federal Government and, as appropriate, engage with the international community.**

##### **1. What near-term, mid-term, and long-term actions would most effectively help the Nation achieve this policy objective?**

Near-term actions should focus on translating the general concepts of Ecosystems-Based Management (EBM) into terms and examples to which decision makers at the above listed levels of government can relate, with special focus on the Regional Ocean Councils.

In most cases, the regional ocean councils incorporate existing means for coordination at the level of the Governors of the affected states, but many important decisions, including expenditures on infrastructure such as waste water treatment plants, and zoning decisions affecting land use in coastal areas, are made at local levels. Also, although there may be coordination mechanisms within the Regional Ocean Councils, the Councils may not yet be coordinating within a framework based on EBM.

There needs to be improved coordination that involves both bottom up and top down aspects of implementation of the National Ocean Policy. There also needs to be improved opportunities for input from the general public and other affected stakeholders

Short-term actions should also include improving coordination across international boundaries, as required by an ecosystem based approach. One key example would be the need to effectively coordinate with the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, which has published its own action plan for the time period 2007-2012. Similar international coordination is required in the Gulf of Mexico; ecosystems that straddle the U.S. and Canadian border in the northwest; and for the Arctic region.

Mid-term and long-term actions should focus on coordination as required to respond to projected changes from climate change, including sea level rise, ocean acidification, and potentially more frequent and intense storm events. This should include gap analyses to identify required changes in laws, rules, regulations, and international compacts.

##### **2. What are some of the major obstacles to achieving this objective; are there opportunities this objective can further, including transformative changes in how we address the stewardship of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes?**

As we point out elsewhere in our public comments, the necessary infrastructure for supporting and coordinating regional planning with CMSP and adaptive management tools does not appear to yet be in place, based on our experiences with attempting to use

CMSP related to wind energy leasing decisions in the federal waters identified as the Massachusetts Request for Interest area.

**3. What milestones and performance measures would be most useful for measuring progress toward achieving this priority objective?**

Important milestones would include those related to full implementation of EBM by the Regional Ocean Councils and adoption of the plans they are required to develop. Other performance measures should be developed to gauge the progress in implementing EBM, CMSP, and adaptive management at international, national, regional, and local levels of governments, including documented improvements in the health of ecosystems.



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April 28, 2011

Ms. Nancy Sutley, Dr. John Holdren and Members  
National Ocean Council  
c/o Council on Environmental Quality  
722 Jackson Place NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Re: CSO Recommendations on *Objective 4: Coordinate and Support*

On behalf of the Coastal States Organization (CSO), we offer the following recommendations to the National Ocean Council (NOC) for use in developing a Strategic Action Plan for *Objective 4: Coordinate and Support*.

Since 1970, CSO has represented the interests of the Governors of the nation's thirty-five coastal states and territories, including the Great Lakes states, on issues relating to the sound management and development of coastal and ocean resources. CSO applauds the *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force* as a significant step in the evolution of the nation's management of ocean and coastal resources. With respect to Objective 4, CSO's recommendations focus on using the existing authorities and capacities provided by the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) to strengthen coordination among governmental and other entities, on increasing efficiencies in governmental coordination, and on increasing the capacity of states and regions to meet the priorities identified under the National Ocean Policy.

State and federal agencies have important authorities and programs for managing resources and uses in coastal and nearshore marine areas. While many are complementary, some can overlap or conflict in complex ways. Multiple state agencies and federal agencies, plus the interests of local governments, tribal nations, stakeholders and the public, make coordination and communication essential to achieving national and state objectives for coastal and marine management. In addition, the spatial demarcation of state and federal ocean waters and the overlapping web of state, federal, and tribal interest in marine areas creates complexity that requires coordination and communication, through formal and informal mechanisms, if national objectives are to be achieved.

For nearly 40 years, state coastal zone management programs approved under the national Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) have played an essential role in carrying out the objectives set by the Congress in 1972 to improve coordination and collaboration across all

levels of government. Because coordination is fundamentally what state coastal management programs do, they represent valuable, experienced and trusted infrastructure that can provide a ready mechanism to help achieve the priority objectives of the National Ocean Policy. In addition, state-level coastal programs, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and Sea Grant Programs act as key intermediaries and service delivery programs at the state and local levels for a wide range of NOAA coastal and marine research and stewardship activities. They can offer these services for priority objectives of the National Ocean Policy.

One of the principal successful coordination mechanisms is the federal consistency review authority provided to coastal states under CZMA. Federal consistency review creates specific coordination procedures for ensuring that the permits or activities authorized by federal agencies within or affecting a state's coastal zone are consistent with the enforceable policies of coastal states and, in some instances, local governments that have been approved by NOAA under the standards of the CZMA. Although federal consistency review has resulted in a few high-profile appeals of state decisions, the vast majority of reviews result in better, more appropriate projects that meet national, state, and local objectives. In the context of coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP), there is the potential to harmonize federal policy and implementation related to marine uses and resources with state coastal policies through advance planning focused on identifying resources issues, existing uses and related constraints and developing mutually agreeable solutions in advance of any consistency determination. Thus, state federal consistency review authority could provide a ready, familiar mechanism and incentive for ensuring coordinated development and implementation of a regional coastal and marine spatial plan.

Coastal states with federally-approved coastal management programs receive funding from the Congress via NOAA to carry out these programs. This federal funding is critical to states but is currently barely sufficient to meet existing needs and expectations. If states are to meet national objectives, expand program capacity to address marine resources and issues, and participate in regional ocean planning, it is imperative that funding to states under the CZMA and funding to the Regional Ocean Partnerships be established.

Objective 4 calls for better coordination and support of Federal, State, tribal, local and regional management of the ocean, coasts and Great Lakes and improved coordination and integration across the Federal Government. CSO recommends the following actions be incorporated into the Strategic Action Plan.

- 1. Explicitly recognize the role of state coastal zone management programs as a mechanism and resource for improving coordination and collaboration to meet the priority objectives of the National Ocean Policy.**
- 2. Reaffirm the federal consistency review provisions through enacting a modernized, reauthorized CZMA.**
- 3. Increase capacity for states and regions to support ocean-related planning and management capacity.**

Near term actions:

- Enact a modernized CZMA with clear policy and program directives and incentives for coastal states and federal agencies to ensure that programs for management, protection,



restoration, or use of ocean, Great Lakes, and coastal resources are coordinated and integrated through all levels of government at all appropriate geographic scales.

- Provide basic technical, policy, and administrative capacity for regional ocean partnerships. Ensure adequate funding for states to maintain staff capacity to engage in regional ocean partnerships.
- Build technical and planning capacity in coastal states necessary to support robust engagement in regional planning bodies.
- Ensure that federal agencies on the NOC clearly understand the states' authority under federal consistency especially as it relates to early coordination with the states prior to taking actions that may impact state coastal zones. This is especially important with new coastal and ocean uses such as renewable energy in which the process and/or impacts are emerging.
- Identify and address legal and institutional barriers to effective coordination among federal agencies in managing ocean resources and existing and emerging uses of the ocean environment, such as renewable energy.
- Encourage meetings of federal partners at the regional level to occur with the same minimum frequency as the Ocean Resource Management Interagency Policy Committee and Ocean Science and Technology Interagency Policy Committee, which is at least every two months.
- Take advantage of the existing program capacities in the National Estuarine Research Reserve program and National Sea Grant College program to coordinate the delivery of information related to the National Ocean Policy to local communities and decision-makers.

#### Mid-term actions:

- Formalize the status of regional ocean partnerships through legislation.
- Establish effective and transparent coordination procedures for federal agencies and states related to planning for and approving renewable energy projects in Great Lakes, coastal and ocean waters.
- Coordinate federal agency data collecting, mapping, and technical assistance and develop mechanisms to share that information with stakeholders and state-level managers through clear processes and web-based delivery tools.
- Develop and propose federal legislation and regulatory changes as needed to implement recommended coordination-related changes in the federal management framework.
- Support and increase capacity of ROPs, which are made up of state and federal agency representatives, to serve the vital function of identifying national, regional and state funds that can be dedicated to the regional priorities. An early success of regional ocean partnerships (ROPs) has been the alignment of federal and other funds toward common priorities. For example, with four federal agencies and five states at the table, future funding opportunities at both the national and state level were realigned toward the identified priorities. The membership on ROPs represents sources of public funding that, if aligned appropriately, can meet the priority objectives of the National Ocean Policy. This also provides an incentive to state, local and tribal governments to participate in the process.

#### Major obstacles:

- Lack of funding to support necessary capacity of regional partnerships and planning.
- Political concerns and uncertainties regarding changes in federal law to ensure efficient and effective cooperation and collaboration among federal agencies.
- Concerns about the effect of regional planning bodies on state authority if a formalization process is undertaken.

- A “one and done” mentality whereby regional plans are created but never updated or implemented anywhere near the intention or need.

Within this objective, there are opportunities for transformative change in the stewardship of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. Regional coordination and planning for the coastal and marine environment together offer an unprecedented opportunity to create meaningful approaches to ocean and coastal management issues. Improved coordination and cooperation among federal agencies could streamline federal environmental review procedures without compromising their thoroughness and thus help to stimulate private investment in renewable ocean energy technologies that is needed to meet national renewable energy goals and address related energy independence and security and environmental objectives.

The states and territories strongly support the NOC in its work to implement the Coordinate and Support Objective. CSO appreciates the opportunity to comment and work with the National Ocean Council on this Action Plan.

Sincerely,



Braxton Davis  
Chair  
Coastal States Organization



Kristen M. Fletcher  
Executive Director  
Coastal States Organization

March 18, 2011

Chairwoman Nancy Sutley  
Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President

Director John Holdren  
Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President

**Re: Recommendations for the Coordinate and Support Strategic Action Plan**

Dear Chairwoman Sutley and Director Holdren:

We are scientists from diverse backgrounds and academic institutions who commend you for your leadership in implementing our nation's new National Ocean Policy (NOP). Our comments outline a series of recommendations for inclusion of ecosystem service concepts and approaches in the Coordinate and Support Strategic Action Plan. Ecosystem services provide a framework to align management objectives and resolve conflicts across jurisdictions. These concepts are fundamental to both ecosystem-based management (EBM) and coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP).

We agree that EBM is *the* "foundational principle for comprehensive management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes." At its core, EBM is about the need to maintain and restore ecosystems so that they can provide the full range of ecosystem services that humans want and need, both now and in the future.

- *If incorporated in EBM, the notion of ecosystem services – the benefits people receive from nature – can transform the way we approach and implement stewardship of these vital ecosystems.*

We also support the notion that CMSP is a practical and concrete path to implementing EBM. By identifying areas suitable for current and proposed activities, CMSP engenders a more rational way of making decisions that accounts for the full range of benefits, values, and uses within a given area.

- *Ecosystem services provide a common language for expressing those values and objectives. This framework can equip decision makers to look at how the goals of one agency or sector intersect with those of others and inform choices among alternatives.*

In short, **ecosystem services will enable those implementing the NOP to find common ground across agencies and sectors, reveal hidden costs, assess tradeoffs, reduce conflict and improve the outcomes of EBM and CMSP.** We provide more detail for each of these benefits below.

**(1) Ecosystem services facilitate alignment of goals across agencies and sectors.**

One of the greatest challenges for implementation of the National Ocean Policy will be determining how diverse institutions (local entities, state and federal agencies) with varied mandates can more effectively work together. The science of ecosystem services provides common terminology around

which agencies can engage and articulate shared goals. Services include things that are already part of decision-making, such as fishery production, wave energy, and coastal recreation. Other key services are largely outside or absent from current decision-making, such as protection from erosion caused by coastal storms and sea level rise, cultural experiences, and stunning views.

Applying an ecosystem services framework can help diverse agencies articulate and consolidate their shared goals. Each agency is currently managing one or more ecosystem services; understanding how services are produced, delivered, and interact will help agencies set goals transparently and cooperatively.

Ecosystem services are traditionally lumped into broad categories and measured in different ways. Lack of precision and established metrics impede effective goal setting, measurement of success, and cross-agency comparisons. A novel 3-step framework for measuring ecosystem services can help. It provides managers and scientists the tools to assess and track:

- 1) The condition of the ecosystem (*supply* metrics)
- 2) The amount of ocean resources actually used or enjoyed by people (*service* metrics)
- 3) People's preference for that level of service (*value* metrics)

For the first time, this framework enables scientists to consistently measure services, assists policy makers in defining goals, and equips managers with tools to track progress towards these goals. Ecosystem services science can provide a standard, transparent platform from which all agencies can work.

We know that this approach works because it has already been tried successfully. Some examples in the U.S. include:

- In Puget Sound, Washington, the Puget Sound Partnership has articulated goals for restoring the Sound that link ecosystem and human wellbeing. Ecosystem services have proven to be a useful framework for finding common ground among diverse stakeholders and assessing tradeoffs among management strategies.
- In Morro Bay, California, ecosystem services played an important role in management by providing a rallying point for diverse interests and facilitating planning at the ecosystem scale.
- Ecosystem services lie at the heart of coastal and ocean planning under the Massachusetts Ocean Act.

## **(2) Ecosystem services reveal hidden costs of our decisions.**

Too often, we discover what we have lost only after it is gone. Our coasts and oceans contain many types of wealth, and these national assets are being unknowingly depreciated. As the full set of benefits to people from nature are made explicit by ecosystem services, this approach gives us a standardized, common-currency way of accounting for human uses, impacts, and values associated with the ocean's natural resources. We already attach dollar values to many of these services, such as food from fisheries or natural products such as pharmaceuticals. However, many services are not commonly assigned value (economic or otherwise) nor are they currently accounted for in decision-making. They are off the ledgers of the public and policymakers, taken for granted, and yet nonetheless prized once made scarce. Many of these undervalued resources can easily become overexploited resources. Examples include carbon storage, protection of shorelines from inundation and erosion provided by coastal habitats, cultural heritage, breathtaking views, and spiritual

benefits. Explicitly accounting for these benefits would reveal hidden costs to many current practices and decisions and would yield better, more readily accepted, and more enduring decisions.

Ecosystem service frameworks help account for the full set of benefits we receive from the ocean and coasts. Measures of social value, aesthetic and cultural significance are quickly gaining support as alternative currencies to dollars. More complete information leads to greater equity; decisions no longer benefit a few, at the cost to many. This can reduce unnecessary conflict, as tradeoffs are made explicitly, in the light of day, rather than as hidden implications.

We must be more effective in recognizing and attaching values to the things we care so much about. We can do this because the concept of ecosystem services now provides us with the necessary tools. For example, the Natural Capital Project<sup>1</sup> provides science capacity to West Coast Aquatic (Vancouver Island, British Columbia) as they craft a marine spatial plan that balances the diverse interests of their stakeholders. By modeling and mapping multiple ecosystem services and the many values that people hold for them (in dollars and other currencies), the Natural Capital Project is giving stakeholders the capacity to weigh concerns about a new ocean use (wave energy) against existing ones.

### **(3) Ecosystem services provide a means to transparently assess tradeoffs among goals.**

Managers make decisions regarding tradeoffs everyday, but often these decisions are not explicit. The common currency of ecosystem services allows people to assess and quantify tradeoffs among the many values and uses of oceans. Thus, services can inform choices among alternatives, increase transparency and accountability in decision-making, and encourage conversation among people who hold disparate values. Explicit assessment of tradeoffs can reduce unwarranted conflict, reduce surprises, and lead to outcomes that benefit more people (finding the win-win's).

Tradeoffs may exist among services or among different locations, resources, sectors, or timeframes (short vs. long-term benefits). Clearly identifying and quantifying tradeoffs helps make clear which sectors likely benefit under different management scenarios. Planners must assess where strong tradeoffs are likely to occur, and seek options where better solutions that reduce or eliminate tradeoffs may be available.

Many methods and models exist for assessing tradeoffs and evaluating alternatives. Although there is need for guidance on how best to use or refine these approaches, the expertise to forecast the consequences of different planning options is already in hand. For example, new analyses in Massachusetts assessed potential tradeoffs among multiple fisheries, wind energy, conservation, and whale watching.<sup>2</sup> The analyses show how different arrangements of wind farm installations benefit or negatively impact the other uses. Best of all, they allow one to quantitatively measure the value added of doing CMSP as compared to sectoral management that ignores the tradeoffs among these different uses.

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<sup>1</sup> The Natural Capital Project is a partnership among Stanford University's Woods Institute for the Environment, University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment, The Nature Conservancy, and World Wildlife Fund ([www.naturalcapitalproject.org](http://www.naturalcapitalproject.org))

<sup>2</sup> White, C., B. Halpern, and C.V. Kappel. Unpublished data.

**We appreciate the opportunity to share these initial comments with you. With the upcoming chance to comment on the draft Strategic Action Plans, we look forward to providing more specific assistance to connect the latest science of ecosystem services to the Council's developing plans to better coordinate and support regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes and to improve coordination and integration across the Federal Government.**

Sincerely,

Karen McLeod  
COMPASS / Oregon State University

Michael Harte  
Oregon State University

Roelof Boumans  
University of Vermont

Lew Incze  
University of Maine

Mark Carr  
University of California, Santa Cruz

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University of California, Santa Barbara

Heather Tallis  
Stanford University

## **For More Information**

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## **Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO)**



*The following provides additional Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO) comments relating to the National Ocean Council's (NOC) "Coordinate and Support" priority objective in the development of the NOC Strategic Action Plan (SAP). Under the "Coordinate and Support" priority objective, the NOC's Final Recommendations call for increased communication, coordination, and integration across all levels of government, which will streamline processes, reduce duplicative efforts, leverage resources, resolve disparities, and enhance synergy. The recommendations also specify that the "Coordinate and Support" SAP should address the following:*

- *Actions to assist the States in advancing the network of regional alliances to protect ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes health;*
- *Evaluation of existing or new funding sources and options to protect, maintain, and restore ocean resources; and*
- *Legislative or regulatory changes necessary to simplify the sharing and transfer of resources among federal, state, tribal, and local agencies.*

MARCO was created by a 2009 interstate agreement among the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia to advance shared priorities for managing the Mid-Atlantic's coastal and ocean resources. The Governors Agreement charged the States to collaboratively address four ocean and coastal priorities:

- Protect critical offshore **HABITATS**.
- Promote the sustainable and appropriate development of **OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY**.
- Prepare the region's coastal communities for the impacts of **CLIMATE CHANGE**.
- Promote improvements in the region's coastal **WATER QUALITY**.

MARCO's ocean priorities are complementary and mutually reinforcing of the National Ocean Policy (NOP) objectives. MARCO is a critical forum for increasing communication and coordination about ocean management activities in the Mid-Atlantic region. Representatives of the five states regularly communicate and have a proven record of collaboration on shared ocean priorities. To date, MARCO has achieved impressive results with increasingly stretched resources. Yet improving ocean management is a huge task and the resources that can be provided by our states are severely constrained. Collaboration with and assistance from the federal government will be essential in order to efficiently and promptly advance the NOP priority objectives and MARCO's shared ocean management priorities. The SAP should call for the systematic identification and application of federal resources in order to advance regional ocean management priorities.

Thus, MARCO believes it is imperative that the SAP for the "Coordinate and Support" objective address the following:



- **Build upon investments** made to date in MARCO and other Regional Ocean Partnerships (ROPs).
- **Leverage state and regional efforts** to advance the NOP.
- **Provide resources to support engagement** of regional and state entities. The nation needs a dedicated, consistent funding source (e.g., Trust Fund) for ocean and coastal management, restoration, science and education. Without one, MARCO and other ROPs will continue to spend an inordinate amount of time preparing applications for an ever shrinking pot of funds. The ocean management challenges are increasing at the same time that funds are decreasing.

In anticipation of funding requested in FY 2011, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released a funding opportunity that would support regional ocean partnerships and regional implementation of coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP). Two proposals were submitted for the Mid-Atlantic. The first focused on further developing the administrative and operational capacities of MARCO and advancing the implementation of its action items. The second focused on enhancing the capacity of MARCO and the Mid-Atlantic States to implement CMSP in collaboration with federal agencies and stakeholders. Through these two proposals, MARCO identified near-term gaps for moving forward with the NOP in the Mid-Atlantic.

The administrative proposal specifically requested funding to:

1. Manage the implementation of MARCO's action items;
2. Formalize MARCO's governance processes and explore the establishment of a more permanent structure;
3. Develop and implement a stakeholder engagement plan; and
4. Produce accomplishments reports and other outreach materials and improve the MARCO website.

Priority CMSP activities identified in the second proposal included:

1. Foster well-informed and engaged Mid-Atlantic ocean partners;
2. Enhance Mid-Atlantic regional capacity to implement CMSP consistent with the national framework; and
3. Enhance the Mid-Atlantic Mapping and Planning Portal to serve as a CMSP decision support system with tools that advance an inclusive, ecosystem-based and scientifically informed adaptive ocean management approach.

- **Institutionalize the CMSP approach** into appropriate federal agencies' planning and operational activities. Federal agencies are now responding to the Presidential Executive Order. While the Executive Order sets the stage, ultimately the federal agencies need to formally integrate this planning process into their planning and regulatory procedures.
- **Emphasize MARCO 2011-2012 Work Plans'** priorities in federal activities. Each of the Work Plans identifies desired outcomes, specific activities, milestones, and roles and responsibilities. They assume current state investments and do not capture many of the complementary or collaborative federal activities. The NOC should set up the appropriate mechanisms so that the clearly articulated near-term ocean management priorities established by MARCO or the other ROPs, can be embraced and supported by the related Regional Planning Bodies.

- **Engage both coastal and non-coastal states.** Actions taken in the middle of the nation are clearly impacting the ocean waters off the Mid-Atlantic (e.g., the burning of fossil fuels contributes to ocean acidification, as well as the accumulation of methylmercury in fish at levels that may harm the fish and animals that eat them.) Effective implementation of the NOP requires that all states (regardless of whether or not they are coastal) recognize the value of the oceans, understand the services provided by the ocean and how inland activities are impacting them, and participate in implementing actions to advance ocean management. A NOC campaign would raise awareness, influence state and federal policy, and change community and individual behaviors that impact ocean health.
- **Allow sufficient time for state processes to operate.** MARCO recognizes that implementation of the NOP is a complicated effort involving a large number of federal agencies and offices. Nevertheless, sufficient response time is necessary to engage governors and other state leaders beyond those involved in the day-to-day operation of regional ocean partnerships. When requesting input from regional organizations and states, MARCO encourages the NOC to allow an appropriate and sufficient amount of time to ensure that these bodies can produce thoughtful responses (e.g., participants in the National CMSP workshop, regional CMSP workshops, etc.).
- Finally, **support the acquisition of additional biological and human use data.** MARCO and the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC) have both developed web-based portals to facilitate access to and sharing of geographic data and tools for managing ocean and coastal resources. MARCO's Mapping and Planning Portal is at [http://www.midatlanticocean.org/map\\_portal.html](http://www.midatlanticocean.org/map_portal.html). The Northeast Ocean Data Portal is at <http://northeastoceandata.org/index.html>. Both regional efforts have identified a critical need for additional data on the most sensitive and valuable ecological resources and the most intensive and economically significant human uses. This information is fundamental for moving forward with CMSP in both regions, especially in light of state and federal goals for accelerating offshore wind power development along the Atlantic coast.

April 15, 2011

Ms. Nancy Sutley, Dr. John Holdren, and Members  
National Ocean Council  
c/o Council on Environmental Quality  
722 Jackson Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

**Re: Recommendations for the Coordinate and Support Strategic Action Plan**

Dear Chairs Sutley and Holdren and National Ocean Council Members,

The undersigned organizations provide the following comments in order to inform the National Ocean Council (NOC) as it develops a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for the national priority objective relating to “Coordinate and Support.” The Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force (Final Recommendations) note throughout that one of the key objectives of the National Ocean Policy (NOP) is to ameliorate the pitfalls of the “shared, piecemeal, and overlapping jurisdictional model”<sup>1</sup> that has been characteristic of U.S. ocean management. The NOP will strive to “streamline processes, reduce duplicative efforts, leverage resources, resolve disparities, and enhance synergy.”<sup>2</sup> To do so, it is essential that this effort not be viewed as a top-down mandate but rather garner the full support of all levels of government. States, tribes, and local governments must view the NOP as an enabling mechanism to address ocean management issues that are important to their region.

Support for implementation will be best generated by including all levels of decision makers, as well as non-governmental stakeholders, in a coordinated and meaningful way in the design and implementation of the SAPs. The NOC has prioritized a transparent and inclusive process for formulation and implementation of the NOP; we appreciate this approach. To maximize effective implementation, we would like to offer recommendations at three levels of government (federal, regional, and international) for inclusion in the Coordinate and Support Strategic Action Plan.

**Federal**

President Obama’s June 2009 memo establishing the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force set forth an aggressive timeline for the federal agencies to develop a national ocean policy. Agencies met with great frequency and produced a set of recommendations that had an equally brisk timeline for implementation. Rigorous interagency dialogue must continue to maintain this initial momentum and achieve the milestones set forth in the timeline. Therefore, as implementation moves forward, the NOC should issue guidance for sustained, formal coordination among federal agencies. This should include a directive requiring federal agencies to continue to meet regularly

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<sup>1</sup> *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

to discuss the implementation the NOP. Meetings must occur both at the national level, where many policy and funding decisions are made, as well as at the regional level, where on-the-ground experience exists and planning decisions will be made. The Final Recommendations require that Ocean Resource Management Interagency Policy Committee and Ocean Science and Technology Interagency Policy Committee meet at least every two months<sup>3</sup> and we encourage meetings with federal partners at the regional level to occur with the same minimum frequency.

Initial meetings should be used to conduct a comprehensive review of existing statutes, regulations, and policies that govern the issues outlined in the national ocean policy to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and duplications across and within the agencies. Subsequent meetings should discuss how to address those issues, update the group on progress made on the SAPs, and identify mechanisms to facilitate their implementation, with an emphasis how to provide resources to the appropriate organizations. Particular efforts should be made to establish partnerships and joint programs that can better leverage federal funding. Discussions at these interagency meetings should be results-driven, producing a set of actionable items with responsible parties.

The NOC guidance should also require agencies to promulgate regulations which support the principles embodied in the NOP and facilitate the implementation of the SAPs. This action will help ensure the longevity and enforceability of the NOP beyond that afforded by the Executive Order.

## **Regional**

The Final Recommendations establish regional planning bodies (RPBs) for the development of coastal and marine spatial plans; however, no coordinating body for activities involving the eight other priority objectives is identified or established. The NOC should identify a means to ensure coordinated and comprehensive implementation of the Strategic Action Plans for those priority objectives. Rather than creating new entities, the RPBs established by the Final Recommendations could serve in that coordination role.

The nine priority objectives are highly interrelated and consideration of any of the priority objectives in isolation would likely lead to the narrow, single-sector resource management approach that has historically resulted in inefficient and ineffectual ocean management. The interconnected nature of the priority objectives will likely require overlap in implementation of their respective SAPs. Consequently, implementation coordination of the entire NOP, not only coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP), at the regional level should be centralized within the RPBs. The RPBs should utilize their discretion in prioritizing coverage of priority objectives as the content of all nine may not apply to all regions (e.g. Changing Conditions in the Arctic).

Like the federal agencies at the national level, the RPBs should undertake a review of existing statutes, regulations and policies at the State, Tribal, and local level to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and duplication. They should recommend actions to correct any such problems and align statutes, regulations, and policies with the principles contained in the NOP and with

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 24-25.

identified regional goals. This should include encouraging States to pass legislation or to adapt policies that advance current legislation which alleviates inconsistencies and furthers the objectives of the national ocean policy and ensures their permanence.

Subsequent to this review and realignment, the focus of the regional planning bodies should be implementation of the SAPs, including identification of agency funds that can be aligned to further implementation. CMSP will necessarily be the primary focus of the regional planning bodies and the details of what this will entail are outlined extensively in the Final Recommendations. This however should not obviate their responsibility to follow the timelines for the other priority objectives outlined in the SAPs. It is likely that the RPBs will be able to produce demonstrable success in achieving some of the objectives of the other SAPs to improve ocean management prior to the finalization of the CMS Plans. Practical accomplishments such as these will be crucial to sustaining support for the activities of the national ocean policy.

The Final Recommendations cite regional governance structures as a potential source of leadership for the regional planning bodies<sup>4</sup> and likewise identify the need to coordinate with such organizations on CMSP.<sup>5</sup> Regional ocean partnerships (ROPs) are one example of this type of regional governance structure, and in certain cases are likely to become the basis of the new RPBs. We do not recommend the complete transfer of responsibility from the ROPs to the RPBs, however, as the ROPs vary a great deal between the regions in terms of membership and scope of activities. Additionally they were created through political agreements and thus are vulnerable to changes in leadership. We do however encourage joint membership between the two organizations where appropriate.

Since the membership of the regional planning bodies is limited to decision makers from federal, state, and tribal governments, it will be necessary to establish consultative processes with other interested stakeholders. We recommend the NOC provide guidance for the establishment of public advisory committees (PACs) to fill this role. These committees could provide a stable, ongoing forum at the regional level for external input from stakeholders and the general public, and could help both collect and disseminate data and information for CMSP. In addition, RPBs should convene regional public forums on at least an annual basis to disseminate information about the health of the ecosystem and the status of the planning effort including its implementation and evaluation. Many of the ROPs have already started consultative processes with stakeholders and the public and so they may serve as a valuable source of advice for how best to populate the membership of PACs and sustain engagement in their respective regions.

Communication not only within but across regions is vital. The NOC should provide guidance on the development of a formal mechanism for information sharing among the RPBs. Such a mechanism could allow sharing of information, best practices, pitfalls, and successes as the regional bodies proceed through the planning and implementation processes. This will be particularly important with regards to CMSP, where some states have already engaged in such planning processes for their waters.

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<sup>4</sup> *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force*, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

Technical communication between the various levels of government and among the RPBs will be greatly facilitated with the development of the national information management system (NIMS). The NIMS will provide a unified source of data across the regions that will ensure that all levels of government are making decisions with the same information. Consequently it is important to make this system as comprehensive and user-friendly as possible to maximize the support it provides the regions. Our recommendations for the characteristics of a successful NIMS are described in further detail in a separate letter.<sup>6</sup>

Additional non-financial support could be made available to the regions by the NOC in the form of subject-area experts. Certain regions may not have much experience in some of the areas of special emphasis and could benefit from outside input. NOC staff could maintain a list of subject-area experts who could be called upon for advice or training by the RPBs. This list should contain not only individuals who are well-versed in physical science, but also those with extensive mediation and coordination experience, as implementation will require the management of both resources and people.

## **International**

In addition to ensuring compliance with all ratified international agreements, it is important that coordination occur between adjacent nations since marine resources, or impacts upon them, are often mobile and not bound by jurisdictional designations. Bilateral cooperation with nations near the Caribbean, Great Lakes, Alaskan/Arctic, Pacific Islands, and Gulf of Mexico regions in particular is essential. U.S. leaders could encourage nations in these regions to adopt similar management regimes or ocean and coastal priorities.

Foreign nations have the potential to serve as a great source of information and experience for many of the priority objectives contained within the national ocean policy, including CMSP. Several nations, such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other European Union member countries, have already engaged in marine spatial planning efforts and likely have important lessons to share as the U.S. efforts move forward. Naturally government structure and dynamics may vary from nation to nation, but there are still important parallels that could be drawn.

To limit the strain placed on foreign colleagues with repeated requests for information, the NOC staff should assemble a CMSP training manual that would outline specific countries' experiences, timelines, and lessons learned. Ideally this would occur prior to the regional CMSP workshops so that the RPBs would have the opportunity to invite foreign practitioners with experience most relevant to issues in their region to the workshops. After the workshops, the document should be made available on the web, giving the public the opportunity to learn more about CMSP. Similar manuals could be developed for the other areas of special emphasis to provide a unified, consistent source of information for each of the regions.

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<sup>6</sup> See Letter from Marine Conservation Biology Institute, et al., to Nancy Sutley & John Holdren, Co-Chairs, National Ocean Council Re: Recommendations for Information Gathering and Data Management for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (March 16, 2011).

## Funding

The goals and objectives laid out by the national ocean policy are broad in scope and will require significant amounts of support, both in terms of funding and personnel. In a time when budgets are becoming increasingly tight, we propose three stages to address funding needs.

In the short-term, the Administration should continue to support national ocean policy priorities in its annual budget requests and seek alignment of funds to advance those priorities. The FY11 and FY12 Presidential Budget requests contain proposals to support CMSP through direct funding to NOAA and the establishment of a competitive grant program administered by NOAA, known as the Regional Ocean Partnership Funding Program (ROPFP).<sup>7</sup> While the initial federal funding opportunity for the ROPFP prioritized coastal and marine spatial planning projects, future opportunities should be open to projects that advance any of the priority objectives of the national ocean policy. As such, this funding could serve to jump-start implementation of the Executive Order, especially at the regional level, until a more permanent funding mechanism can be established.

In the short to medium term, federal agencies should incorporate the principles of the NOP into their planning, programming, and budgeting processes. Agencies are already engaged in many projects which further the implementation of the national ocean policy. As the Final Recommendations state and the Presidential Executive Order on the national ocean policy requires, “each of the Federal agencies engaged in the implementation of strategic action plans would re-evaluate how resources should best be allocated in light of their statutory and regulatory mandates.”<sup>8</sup> Large budgetary increases are unlikely, so agencies need to be creative and work together to maximize their funding’s impact through partnerships or joint programming. Furthermore, in anticipation of cuts, agencies should review their existing projects and prioritize them so that programs that are most effective in supporting the NOP retain funding. As noted above, the regional planning bodies can serve as a mechanism to align funds toward common goals under the national ocean policy.

In the long term, for greater security and permanence, we recommend the establishment of a dedicated fund for ocean stewardship that would be used to support the national ocean policy. This fund ideally would be permanently appropriated and would be capitalized by revenue derived from the development of publicly-owned ocean resources in federal waters. Following the signing of the Executive Order in July 2010, Senators Whitehouse and Snowe introduced a bill endorsing a National Endowment for the Oceans.<sup>9</sup> That same month, the House passed the Consolidated Land, Energy and Aquatic Resources Act of 2010 which proposed the establishment of an Ocean Resources Conservation and Assistance Fund.<sup>10</sup> These efforts may not be successful in the immediate future, which is why agency-specific implementation funding is

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<sup>7</sup> Fiscal Year 2011 Budget of the United States Government, Department of Commerce. Available at: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/usbudget/fy11/pdf/budget/commerce.pdf>; Fiscal Year 2012 Budget of the United States Government, Department of Commerce. Available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2012/assets/commerce.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force*, p. 30-31.

<sup>9</sup> S.3641 National Endowment for the Oceans Act (111<sup>th</sup> Congress).

<sup>10</sup> Sec. 605, H.R.3534 Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources Act of 2010 (111<sup>th</sup> Congress).

required. However, establishment of a dedicated fund for ocean conservation and management should remain a long-term goal of the national ocean policy. Successful establishment of such a fund will require legislation, but will also require strong support from the Administration.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations; we would welcome the chance to discuss them in more detail as needed. We appreciate all the effort you and your agencies have invested in the national ocean policy to date, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to protect, maintain, and restore the health of our valuable coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes ecosystems.

Sincerely,

Sarah Winter Whelan  
Director, Regional Marine Conservation Project  
American Littoral Society

Sean Cosgrove  
Marine Campaign Director  
Conservation Law Foundation

William Chandler  
Vice President for Government Affairs  
Marine Conservation Biology Institute

Sarah Chasis  
Director, Oceans Initiative  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Anna Zivian  
Marine Spatial Planning Senior Advisor  
Ocean Conservancy

Chris Mann  
Senior Officer  
Pew Environment Group



# **Index:**

**Attachments to Comments**

**And Letters Received**

**Pertaining to Coordinate and Support and  
Other Strategic Action Plans**



April 29, 2011

Ms. Nancy Sutley, Dr. John Holdren, and Members  
National Ocean Council  
Council on Environmental Quality  
722 Jackson Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear National Ocean Council Members:

On behalf of Food & Water Watch (FWW),<sup>i</sup> please accept this letter as formal comments on the Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) of the National Priority Objectives (Objectives) for implementing the Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force. We appreciate the National Ocean Council's efforts in overcoming ad-hoc, fragmented oceans management and planning for long-term, holistic approach to oceans policy.

As a consumer organization, FWW is very interested in U.S. ocean policy as it relates to the product consumers ultimately receive. People tell us regularly that they are paying more attention to the fish they eat, how it is produced or caught, and whether it is well managed. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on these matters, and will address four of the nine objectives, reminding the Council that we have also previously submitted comments on the Policy as a whole.

### **Objective One: Ecosystem-Based Management**

When considering fisheries, ecosystem-based management often refers to the consideration of all wild stocks and how they interact with each other and the marine environment. FWW supports the Council's efforts to break free of the narrow focus of single-species management, as successful fisheries management can only arise from consideration of big picture, ecosystem-level relationships. We seek to expand the Council's understanding on how failure to consider other industrial activities that impact fisheries, such as offshore aquaculture, can prevent successful management of a marine ecosystem's wild fish stocks.

#### *The Dangers of Offshore Aquaculture*

Ocean finfish farming can be problematic for both the environment and the economy. The waste – fecal matter, uneaten food, and any chemicals or drugs used in the operation – flows directly into the ocean, and the ecological equilibrium of the seafloor or surrounding area could be permanently damaged.<sup>ii</sup> Fish often escape from ocean cages, and once in the wild, they can interbreed with or outcompete wild fish, leading to decreased genetic viability and potential population collapses. Even before fish escape, they can spread diseases and

parasites to nearby wild fish. For example, sea lice have been well documented to be problematic around salmon farms.<sup>iii</sup>

Ocean fish farming could actually increase pressure on wild fish, because the most commonly farmed fish are carnivorous – they often need to eat other fish. Thus, the feed given to captive fish often uses large quantities of fishmeal and fish oil.<sup>iv</sup> Already, fish farms use a significant portion of the world supply of fishmeal and fish oil from our oceans, such as sardines, herring, and menhaden.<sup>v</sup> Removing these fish from the ocean to feed farmed fish reduces the availability of food for whales and other ocean mammals, and for larger predatory fish and sea birds. Notably, these smaller fish are also food for many low-income coastal communities worldwide. Reducing stock availability may deprive already food insecure people of a primary protein source.

Using soy to replace fishmeal has been suggested as a more sustainable option, but this alternative is not without concerns. The implications of adding a terrestrial plant – high in estrogen-mimicking compounds, which has been known to harm the reproductive capabilities of fresh water fish<sup>vi</sup> – to the oceans over the long term have not been fully researched. Moreover, fish fed diets high in soy produce more excrement,<sup>vii</sup> thus adding extra waste to the marine environment.

Ecosystem based management requires taking into account impacts on human communities as well as the health of ocean resources. Unfortunately, fish farming can also harm commercial and recreational fishermen, as well as the coastal communities where they live. Worse than failing to fulfill the promise to provide new jobs, U.S. ocean fish farms are likely to outcompete and ultimately replace traditional fishing occupations, causing widespread job losses. This happens due to simple market forces: industrial farming can regularly produce tons of fish. Flooding the market with these fish can cause prices to drop. Also, companies can usually charge less for farmed fish, because artificially subsidized mass production is less costly and less time intensive

**Environmental concerns with ocean fish farming:**

- The only published study of offshore aquaculture in the United States found that aquaculture cages, even in deep ocean waters (35 meters deep, with bottom currents estimated to be no stronger than 50 cm/s), had “grossly polluted” the sea floor and “severely depressed” marine life at some sampling sites very close to the fish cages and that, over the course of 23 months, these effects had spread to sites up to 80 meters away.<sup>1</sup>

- Extensive research shows that the escape of farmed fish into the wild can result in competition for food and space, and cause predation on native species.<sup>2</sup>

- A study in 2007 of sea bass and gilthead sea bream operations in the Mediterranean Sea found significant sedimentation of feces and uneaten feed underneath fish farms placed at depths of about 50 to 90 feet with swift currents.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lee, Han W. et al., Temporal Changes in the Polychaete Infaunal Community Surrounding a Hawaiian Mariculture Operation.” *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, Vol. 307, 175–185 (January 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Marine Aquaculture Task Force, “Sustainable Marine Aquaculture: Fulfilling the Promise; Managing the Risks.” January 2007. One species with two biologies: Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) in the wild and in aquaculture. *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 55(Suppl. 1):131–144).

<sup>3</sup> Holmer, M. et al. “Sedimentation of organic matter from fish farms in oligotrophic Mediterranean assessed through bulk and stable isotope ( $\delta^{13}C$  and  $\delta^{15}N$ ) analyses.” *Aquaculture*, 262: 268–280, 2007.



than traditional fishing. Usually, fishermen cannot compete with lower fish prices, especially now with sky-high rates for the fuel necessary to run fishing boats.

As the number of fishermen dwindles, other local businesses will also suffer, risking more job loss and hurting economies of coastal communities. Even industrial enthusiasts have openly stated that offshore aquaculture will neither lead to a net increase in employment, nor domestically available seafood. (Current trade patterns and international imbalances in seafood import standards mean that 70% of U.S. seafood is exported to countries that are willing to pay for higher health, safety, environmental and labor standards.)

### *Incorporating the Council's Call for Ecosystem Based Management Offers a Solution*

A holistic, more eco-system based approach to fisheries management requires revisiting the Administration's current emphasis on ocean fish farming as the main way to increase US finfish production. Ocean fish farming – potentially injurious on so many levels - should not be allowed to expand in U.S. waters, especially after so much time has been put into developing a sustainable long-term approach to oceans management. Rather than creating a federal policy to regulate offshore aquaculture or to permit or “zone” its development, this Task Force should direct the NOC *not* to pursue ocean aquaculture in U.S. waters, and instead develop a strategic action plan to prevent such harm.

While there is a need to supplement wild-caught domestic fish to meet consumer demand for seafood, there are many forms of aquaculture that could fill this niche, and some are better than others for producing a cleaner, greener, and safer product. Rope-grown farmed shellfish, like mussels, is a good example.<sup>viii</sup> Another form of more sustainable aquaculture is land-based Recirculating Aquaculture Systems (RAS), closed-loop facilities that retain and treat the water within the system.

### **Objective Two: Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP)**

If done well, CMSP can offer beneficial, common-sense results, such as the example of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, on p. 45 of the National Ocean Policy document. However, there is great concern that CMSP will be used to zone exclusive access to benefit a lucky few businesses, to the detriment of our natural resources and the public.

### *Exercise Caution in Protecting “New Investments”*

FWW is concerned that the goal to protect “new investments” could dominate the others. This goal (p. 48) reads: “Increase certainty and predictability in planning for and implementing new investments for ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes uses.” On the very same page, offshore aquaculture is referred to as an “emerging use.” We are concerned that shortcuts might be taken to streamline zoning of certain areas of



the ocean for offshore aquaculture – and that because they have been zoned as such, that environmental impact assessment requirements might be reduced or expedited, and public input therefore inappropriately limited or eliminated.

While it is true that CMS Plans do not substitute for “existing legal obligations,” it would be problematic if a fast-tracked permitting process for offshore aquaculture, for example, were to be interpreted as having met such obligations.

### *Stakeholders and Opting Out*

FWW applauds the Task Force for recognizing the importance of public and stakeholder engagement, even in the early stages of a CMS Plan (phase I). Part of ensuring “substantial opportunity for public participation” means that the opinions and experience of people from the region will be seriously considered in addition to local agencies. On p. 63 it appears that regional fishery management councils (RFMCs) will be consulted as part of the CMSP process. While this makes sense, it is imperative that agency officials do not equate consultation with RFMCs as having sufficient regional public input. RFMCs are composed of members who have been chosen in part based on their profession and have an incentive to protect their industries. Oftentimes, the concerns of fishermen, coastal businesses, waterfront communities, consumers and conservationists from their region are not given full consideration. Additional stakeholder processes should be put in place during CMS program development.

Because there is no ability to opt-out of a CMS Plan, FWW is very concerned that local groups, regions, or states might potentially become subject to CMS Plans that they do not support. On p. 60, the Task Force states: “In the event that a particular State or tribe opts not to participate in the development or implementation of a CMS Plan, the development or implementation of the CMS Plan would continue.” This seems very problematic. For example, if the question for the numerous agencies is where to site sea cages for use in offshore aquaculture in order to best avoid shipping lanes and essential fish habitat, it is inappropriate to only ask the public where to locate the cages when the public opposes the operation altogether. Rather, the question should be whether or not to move forward with ocean aquaculture before asking where to site it.

FWW believes that an opt-out provision would be beneficial. If a proposed CMS Plan is not in the public interest, it should not go forward. The Task Force must consider what criteria should be used to determine whether a CMS Plan is in the public interest for a given region, and how that region can opt-out of a plan.

### **Objective Four: Coordinate and Support**

The following suggestions in this section will focus primarily on the regional management of the ocean, particularly ensuring that the voices of those in coastal



communities are given equal or greater weight than economically driven industry voices.

### *Council Reform and Comprehensive Management*

Interagency coordination has often been a disjointed and closed-door process in the past due to lack of coordination between agencies and the council decision-making process. The second issue is the closed-door nature of fisheries management decision-making, which should be more transparent.

In order to address the lack of agency coordination, the new ocean governance agency should be separate from the Department of Commerce. As long as fisheries management remains under Commerce, it will remain difficult to manage fish in a manner that does not place too large of an emphasis on economic gain, rather than sustainable use of shared public trust resources. Language in the Magnuson-Stevens Act suggesting decision-makers should consider all factors is currently insufficient to address this issue.

The new agency should focus on the bigger picture, and allocate its resources to dealing with problem areas instead of continuing with a reactive approach that responds to a particular fish stock on the verge of collapse. The agency must work on a holistic, ecosystem-based approach to marine resources management.

In 2002, a Stanford University study found four reasons why the councils are not able to effectively regulate coastal fisheries:

- 1. The councils decide both how many fish can be caught and who can catch them. Because larger catches are easier to divide up among competing fishery interests, the councils' responsibility to allocate catches encourages them to set lax fishery limits undermining conservation.*
- 2. More than 80 percent of the citizens who are appointed to the councils by the Secretary of Commerce represent the fishing industry. Homogeneous groups are less likely to produce well-considered decisions than groups with diverse membership.*
- 3. The large number of council members drawn from industry results in ubiquitous conflicts of interest. Yet the conflict of interest rules that apply to the councils are very weak compared to those that apply to other government decision-makers.*
- 4. Despite its legal responsibility to carefully oversee the councils, NMFS gives the councils significant leeway in decision-making.<sup>ix</sup>*





To these, we add that council appointees are finalized by the very entities they advise (NMFS, NOAA, and the Department of Commerce). This means that “loading” the councils – to ensure recommendations in line with administration priorities, whether the public supports these priorities or not – is happening more and more. This is very troubling. Administration appointees should not interfere with the appointment of council members without a publicly stated and justifiable cause. For example, last year, Rita Merritt was removed from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, against the will of Governor Perdue of North Carolina and that of many fishermen in the region. While there was no stated reason for this change on the Council, many have speculated it was due to Merritt’s resistance to the Administration’s interest in pushing for catch shares.

The intent behind the Council system is to have people most familiar with the regional fisheries participate in management and to represent those in the region. Unfortunately, this system is broken. The council appointment process should be revised to both expand participation (with various interests represented), and to promote a more public approach to appointments.

The new agency should also address issues that have arisen with Interdisciplinary Planning Teams (IPTs), which have functioned in a way that avoids regional public input. Formed several years ago by the RFMCs and NMFS, these advisory bodies are composed of council members, NMFS and other agency personnel, and occasionally experts called in for consultation. The IPTs meet regularly to discuss developing council plans, outside of public venues and without public notice (meaning that there has been no publication in the Federal Register of these meetings). The IPTs have made changes to plans without public input and present these changes at council meetings for approval.

This is not how the council process was intended to function - nor is it in keeping with the key principle that oceans resources are public assets. While we appreciate the greater interest and coordination on council plans, IPTs hinder the transparency of the process. In the interest of a more collaborative and public approach to fisheries management, we urge that IPTs either be discontinued *or* that they be fully open to the public and announced in the Federal Register like council meetings.

Stakeholder input through public comment sessions should be given more weight in the decision making process. As it currently stands, councils do a poor job of advertising public comment periods. As mentioned above, they are not even a part of IPT meetings. This discourages public participation in fisheries management. In our own experience with public comment sessions at council meetings, oftentimes certain groups are given more time than others to comment, and those left to comment last receive the least amount of time and attention. This is inappropriate. Equal time should be allotted to all participants.



In addition to clear notice of *when* the public may comment at meetings, councils should consider the comments made in a more meaningful way. For instance, councils often listen to hours of public comments, and then fail to address any of the issues raised during the subsequent discussion. In sum, public participation should be more than just a requisite farce – and in addition to allowing more opportunities for public comment and giving widespread notice of when public comment periods are scheduled, public input should be considered carefully in decision-making.

### The Governance Coordinating Committee

In addition to issues with RFMC reform, we desire to highlight the role of the Governance Coordinating Committee. It is critical that the “eighteen members from States, federally-recognized tribes, and local governments” truly represent the interests of the people from those areas. To that end, we are concerned that these “members would be chosen by the NOC.” Giving the federal officials the power to choose who they want to work with at the state, local, and tribal level might lead to the selection of those who already share a similar interest in a given management plan or CMSP, rather than necessarily representing the interests of the people. This might inadvertently leave out important concerns of the people from that region and inappropriately limit the amount of information and experience in designing the program.

### The Ocean Research and Resources Advisory Panel (ORRAP)

In a similar vein, the role of ORRAP is highly problematic. The Secretary of Defense chooses ORRAP members, and it is unclear why the Department of Defense should exclusively determine who makes up this advisory panel intended for more holistic ocean management. The public should have a more active role in nominating and confirming the members of this group, to avoid security and industry interests dominating the thinking and outcomes. It is furthermore difficult to see how ORRAP “would provide independent advice and guidance to the NOC,” particularly when some members are explicitly from “ocean industries” (p. 27).

The expansion of ORRAP is also perplexing – “membership would be reviewed to determine whether to include additional representatives to broaden the level of expertise in support of the goals of the National Policy.” Members from a wide array of interests must be included for this body to be valuable, and the NOC should reconsider and redesign this body so that the public has a prominent role in the representation. It remains unclear which goals would require “additional representatives.” The NOC should furthermore disallow the Secretary of Defense to serve as the controlling entity.

## **Objective Seven: Water Quality and Sustainable Practices on Land**

### *Adoption of Recirculating Aquaculture Systems to Curb Pollution*





There are many forms of aquaculture, including open-water and recirculating aquaculture. Open-water aquaculture, as discussed above, allows fecal waste, chemicals, antibiotics and excess feed to flow freely into rivers, bays and oceans. This unfiltered discharge does not occur in land-based recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS). The NOC should emphasize RAS to increase aquaculture production in the US over environmentally harmful forms of aquaculture, such as open-water.

*Smart and Responsible Land Use to Protect the Marine Environment*

While addressing the issue of water quality and sustainable practices on land will be a multi-faceted approach, FWW believes that any meaningful approach to both fish farming and production of vegetables, one that fully internalizes the true costs of production, will involve land-based aquaponics. We can spare the ocean the pollution from unsustainable ocean fish farming and chemically-intensive agricultural operations and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations by adopting a safer alternative to aquaculture and agriculture on land.

A national policy supporting RAS would enable this industry to grow faster than it has on its own. Since the policy of NOAA has been to support ocean fish farming, the industry has received millions of dollars in grant money, but existing ocean fish farms at academic institutions and state waters have yet to prove that they can be ecologically sustainable or economically feasible. If these grants could be directed toward RAS, such as in S. 3417, The Research in Aquaculture Opportunity and Responsibility Act (2010), they would fund development of a more feasible and environmentally friendly industry, which could provide fresh local seafood across the country. NOAA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture should manage RAS under a coordinated program.

Thank you for considering our comments, and please feel free to contact any of us who are part of the Fish Program at Food & Water Watch.

Sincerely,

Food & Water Watch Fish Program

*Marianne Cufone, Director*  
*James Mitchell, Policy and Legislative Coordinator*  
*Christina Lizzi, Policy Analyst*  
*Eileen Flynn, Writer & Researcher*  
*Meredith McCarthy, Researcher*

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<sup>1</sup> Food & Water Watch (FWW) is a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC that runs cutting-edge campaigns to help ensure clean water and safe food. We work



with various community outreach groups around the world to create an economically and environmentally viable future. We advocate for safe, wholesome food produced in a humane and sustainable manner, and public rather than private control of water resources, including oceans, rivers and groundwater. The FWW Fish Program promotes clean, green, safe seafood for consumers, while helping to protect the environment and support the long term well-being of coastal communities.

- ii Alston, D.E. et al. "Environmental and Social Impacts of Sustainable Offshore Cage Culture Production in Puerto Rican Waters." University of Puerto Rico - University of Miami, unpublished, 2005.
- iii Krkosek, M, Ford, J.S., Myers, R, A., Lewis, M.A. "Parasites from Farm Salmon Declining Wild Salmon Populations in Relation to Parasites from Farm Salmon," *Science* 318, 2007 at 1772.
- iv Naylor, Rosamond L. et al. "Effect of aquaculture on world fish supplies," *Nature* Vol. 405, 2007 at 1017- 1024.
- v Tacon, Albert et al. "Use of Fishery Resources as Feed Inputs to Aquaculture Development: Trends and Policy Implications." FAO Fisheries Circular No. 1018, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 2006.
- vi Kidd, Karen. "Effects of Synthetic Estrogen on Aquatic Population: A Whole Ecosystem Study," Freshwater Institute, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
- vii Naylor, Rosamond L. et al. "Feeding aquaculture in an era of finite resources." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 106, iss. 36, September 8, 2009 at 15106.
- viii "FAQs." American Mussel Harvesters, Inc. North Kingston, RI available at: [www.americanismussel.com/faqs.html](http://www.americanismussel.com/faqs.html).
- ix Eagle, Josh et al. *Taking Stock of the Regional Fishery Management Councils*. Pew Science Series on Conservation and the Environment. Island Press. 2003, at 5.



## National Fish Habitat Action Plan

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April 29, 2011

Chairwoman Nancy Sutley  
Council on Environmental Quality, Executive Office of the President  
722 Jackson Place NW  
Washington, DC 20506

Director John Holdren  
Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President  
725 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20502

### **Re: Recommendations for the Strategic Action Plans**

Dear Chairwoman Sutley and Director Holdren:

On behalf of the National Fish Habitat Board (board), I am writing to provide our thoughts on the nine strategic action plans that will be developed by the National Ocean Council. We appreciate the opportunity to provide this input and look forward to working with you and the National Ocean Council to ensure that conservation and restoration of fish habitat is a key priority.

As you know, an unprecedented coalition of anglers, conservation groups, scientists, state and federal agencies, and industry leaders forged the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (action plan) in 2006. The action plan is an investment strategy for making the most effective use of habitat conservation dollars in achieving real gains in aquatic habitat quality and quantity by protecting, restoring, and enhancing key fisheries habitats. To date, the board has approved 17 regional Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs), spanning all 50 states. The FHPs involve a diverse group of public and private sector groups with common interests in conserving and restoring fish habitat. The FHPs work within a national framework to develop strategic plans, identify priorities, and leverage resources for on-the-ground conservation action.

In addition, the board and several federal agencies have invested in the first-ever national assessment of fish habitats within the United States. Based on that assessment, we just published a national report on fish habitat, *Through a Fish's Eye: The Status of Fish Habitats in the United States 2010*, which illustrates the relative magnitude and geographic distribution of many factors that contribute to aquatic habitat degradation. The work we conducted with our partners at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on the extent and causes of coastal and estuarine degradation is a tremendous step forward in the nation's understanding of the risk of current habitat degradation around the coast.

A web-based data mapping tool that has been developed in correlation with the report ([www.nbii.gov/far/nfhap](http://www.nbii.gov/far/nfhap)), can provide you with additional information about the assessment work we have completed. The tool was developed by the U.S. Geological Survey's Biological Informatics Program under guidance of the board's science and data committee. This tool not only enables users to see multiple views depicting the condition of stream and coastal habitats across the country, but also means that users are only a mouse click away from more detailed information at finer scales, and from the ability to download data files and map services.

As you move forward in developing action plans to implement the National Ocean Policy, we ask that you consider the following comments on the priority areas.

### **Coordinate and Support**

The National Fish Habitat Action Plan is an important state-federal-private partnership program that is achieving results on the ground. We want to ensure that the National Ocean Council works to improve ecosystem-based management and implement regional ecosystem protection and restoration programs through existing programs and partnerships like ours. We do not want to see the creation of new programs that will take limited resources away from successful initiatives. It is important that the National Ocean Council takes the time and effort to ensure the regional planning bodies understand the existing programs and tools both state and federal agencies can bring to the table.

In addition, we want to ensure that some of the best tools the federal government has for ocean and coastal protection are not overlooked in implementing the National Ocean Policy. Both the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), run by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are significant tools in the nation's ability to enhance fish habitats along the coast. Since these two programs are in an agency that is not often associated with coastal and ocean issues, we feel it is important to draw your attention to them. As you know, these programs are significant contributors to reducing the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico through the Upper Mississippi River Basin Initiative. They are also being used to support Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, and other coastal restoration initiatives. We strongly encourage the National Ocean Council to work with NRCS to ensure WHIP, EQIP, and other appropriate NRCS conservation programs are used to effectively enhance important coastal fish habitat. This is particularly important to ensure that the fresh water resources so important to coastal and estuarine water quality and quantity are effectively managed.

### **Inform Decisions and Improve Understanding**

As noted above, the board has completed a condition analysis of all fish habitats in the United States and the data is available through a state-of-the-art geographic interface on the internet. We believe the work we have conducted can inform decisions and improve understanding through further development of geospatial and data synthesis tools. These tools will link watershed conservation actions with downstream effects on the condition of coastal and marine habitats. We encourage the National Ocean Council and the regional planning bodies to work with us to build upon the work that we have already created.

### **Regional Ecosystem Efforts**

The FHPs are directly involved in providing regional ecosystem conservation and restoration efforts. Ten of the 17 FHPs have an ocean or coastal nexus. The FHPs have developed science-based, collaborative strategies for conserving and restoring aquatic habitats while aligning goals among diverse partners that include federal, state, tribal, and non-governmental entities. Through the FHPs— the “primary work

units” of the action plan – stakeholders collaborate to implement fish habitat conservation projects that address their mutual goals. We encourage the National Ocean Council and the regional planning bodies to work with the FHPs to ensure regional ecosystem projects are implemented in accordance with already-established priorities for fish habitat conservation and restoration.

Finally, we also encourage the National Ocean Council and the Administration to support the passage of the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA). NFHCA will codify the important work that this state-federal-private partnership has achieved over the past six years, and ensure that focused, on-the-ground, grassroots-driven efforts to conserve and restore fish habitat continue throughout the United States.

If I can provide any additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly R Hepler". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Kelly Hepler  
National Fish Habitat Board Chairman

April 28, 2011

Nancy Sutley  
Council on Environmental Quality  
722 Jackson Place NW  
Washington, DC 20506

John Holdren  
Office of Science and Technology Policy  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, DC 20502

**Re: Strategic Action Plan Comments on Priority Objectives Two, Three, and Four**

Dear Chairwoman Sutley and Director Holdren:

As a student at Vermont Law School who has just attended a conference on coastal and marine spatial planning, I respectfully submit to the National Ocean Council these comments on priority objectives one, two, and four. With these comments I outline how priority objective four should be incorporated into priority objectives one and two.

**The international community should be engaged in the process of implementing ecosystem-based management and coastal and marine spatial planning.**

Objective four states an interest in engaging with the international community as appropriate. This part of objective four should not be downplayed. It is appropriate to engage the international community when carrying out objective one, coastal and marine spatial planning, and objective two, ecosystem-based management.

The Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force emphasize the importance of United States accession to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Ratifying UNCLOS is indeed an essential step to the management of our ocean resources. UNCLOS identifies rights and responsibilities of a nations' use of the oceans including the need for conservation and protection; however, it lacks the necessary backing for EBM. CMSP is a tool that can be used to accomplish the objective of EBM. In order to effectively accomplish EBM, the NOC should seek international support beyond that of UNCLOS in the area of CMSP.

For the purposes of CMSP the Task Force's Final Recommendations divided the United States into nine regional planning areas based on large marine ecosystems. However, many species, natural resources, and human uses cross the boundaries of these LMEs, both within different regions of the U.S. and beyond the jurisdiction of the United States. Consequently, management of these resources will be difficult while staying solely within the jurisdiction of the United States. Without integration of and coordination with the international community, EBM and CMSP will not be as effective as desired.

**Programs already implemented in states and other nations should be used as precedent for implementing ecosystem-based management and coastal and marine spatial planning.**

CMSP is practiced differently across the world and terms are used inconsistently, however the NOC should take advantage of other nations and individual states that have implemented CMSP. These nations are setting precedent and establishing processes. Prime examples include The Netherlands and Rhode Island. Although CMSP should be implemented region-by-region and state-by-state in order to meet localized needs, the NOC should use these existing examples to provide a foundation to begin CMSP in the nine LMEs.

The main obstacle to implementation of coastal and marine spatial planning is a lack of data and information. The first thing the NOC should focus on is extensive mapping of each LME. All relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to, federal agencies, states, regions, tribes, fisherman, and developers, should be involved in the mapping process. Ecosystem based management is multidisciplinary; therefore CMSP cannot be effectively implemented without engaging all relevant stakeholders from the start.

For purposes of conflict avoidance and effective implementation of EBM, scientific analysis and mapping cannot end at the boundary of each LME. In order to preserve highly migratory fish stocks and marine mammals international cooperation will be necessary. Consequently, CMSP must take into account programs being implemented in other nations. It should be kept in mind that CMSP is a tool, not the ultimate goal. If one of the goals of Executive Order 13547 is to implement effective EBM, then CMSP must utilize the international community with greater importance than the language “as appropriate” used in priority objective four.

Thank you for your efforts and for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

AnnaKate Hein  
Vermont Law School, Student  
ahein@vermontlaw.edu

Recommended Materials:

Fanny Douvère & Charles Ehler, *New Perspectives on Sea Use Management: Initial Findings from European Experience with Marine Spatial Planning*, 90 *Journal of Environmental Management* 77-88 (2009).

Jake Rice, Kristina Gjerde, Jeff Ardron, Salvatore Arico, Ian Cresswell, Elva Escobar, Susie Grant, & Marjo Vierros, *Policy Relevance of Biogeographic Classification for Conservation and Management of Marine Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, and the GOODS Biogeographic Classification*, 54 *Ocean & Coastal Management* 110-122 (2011).

# SPO



## Maine State Planning Office

Executive Department

PAUL R. LEPAGE  
Governor

DARRYL BROWN  
Director

April 29, 2011

Nancy Sutley, Chair  
Council on Environmental Quality  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

FILED ELECTRONICALLY

RE: National Ocean Council; Comments on the strategic plans to address national objectives

Dear Ms. Sutley:

We are writing in response to the January 24, 2011, Federal Register notice published by the Office of Science and Technology Policy.<sup>1</sup> The notice solicits comments for consideration by the National Ocean Council (NOC) in developing proposed strategic action plans for the nine priority objectives which are identified in final recommendations of the CEQ-led Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force (Task Force) and incorporated by reference in Executive Order 13547. The State of Maine has grave, fundamental concerns about the establishment of such a far-reaching policy, and its associated initiatives, that are completely outside the legislative process and in a manner that not only bypasses, but completely excludes, current statutorily established decision making bodies.

### **Overview:**

Maine has a strong and enduring interest in protecting and enhancing the biological productivity of the ocean environment and opportunities for related beneficial human uses, such as commercial fishing, and both exercises its constitutional rights and participates in statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies whose authority has been established by statute and supersede those of the National Ocean Policy (NOP). Ensuring compatibility and minimizing potential conflicts among fishing and other valuable, traditional ocean uses and promising, emerging uses of the marine environment, such as deep-water offshore wind energy production, needs to be among the primary objectives of coastal and marine spatial planning and needs to be conducted under the aegis of those states and statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies. Accordingly, we urge the NOC to ensure that its strategic action plans

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<sup>1</sup> The Maine State Planning Office (SPO) developed these comments in consultation with the Office of the Governor, Maine Departments of Marine Resources, Environmental Protection, and Conservation. SPO's duties include administration of the State's networked coastal zone management program.



answer to and serve these core interests and authorities, which are vitally important not only to Maine but to the nation as a whole.

Coastal and marine spatial planning (CMSP) is a central and defining feature of the NOP and a principal engine of change that may drive action and progress in meeting a number of the Policy's objectives. We recognize that CMSP has the potential to serve the above-noted, overarching public policy goals and to facilitate optimal use of the marine environment. Realization of that potential is, however, contingent on a number of factors, chief among them assurance that:

- Coastal marine spatial plans are conceived as dynamic, information-oriented tools to be employed by public and private decision-making bodies established by statute, operating under the constitutional authority of states, tribal or other authority, as opposed to static, prescriptive zoning plans that may both unduly hamper existing uses and discourage investment and innovation related to emerging uses;
- There is adequate representation of fisheries managers and the interests of the fishing industry and other existing users and stakeholders of the marine environment, including seats at the decision-making table for representative of states and of statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies such as the New England Fisheries Management Council (NEFMC) as well as interstate management bodies such as the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), at all planning and decision-making stages;
- Expectations regarding state contribution to CMSP efforts, including the nature and extent of state agencies' participation, are commensurate with resources available for plan development, implementation, and on-going improvement of information resources;
- Maine's interests are considered on par with those of other more densely populated and more developed states in its Northeast planning region; and
- The unique resources and environmental conditions of Maine's coastal waters, which are generally subject to a lower degree of upland development-related influences than those of other Northeast states and not currently significantly exploited for commercial interests, are taken into consideration when evaluating and accurately reflected in developing policy options that may affect uses of or in its coastal waters.

The following comments highlight specific issues or concerns regarding several SAP objectives and are divided into recommended short, medium, and long-term actions.

**Objective 1: "Ecosystem-Based Management:** Adopt ecosystem-based management as a foundational principle for the comprehensive management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes"

Short term:

- Clarify EBM definition. To ensure a shared understanding and facilitate comparison and assessment of relevant initiatives, the NOC should clearly define "ecosystem-based management" (EBM) as used in its strategic plans and related activities. This definition should be well-adapted to CZMA-based coastal planning and management; and consequently should specify that EBM is an approach and tool for use by managers of statutorily mandated resource management bodies to use in the exercise of their responsibilities and authorities. The NOC's plan should recognize that such an approach necessitates and identifies sources for additional federal funding support, through the CZMA or otherwise, to ensure state-level capacity for:
  - scientific research to improve understanding of current environmental conditions, stressors, and impact thresholds;
  - a robust public process conducted under statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies to develop ecosystem values;
  - design and implementation of regulations based on sound science;
  - programs that monitor effectiveness and the ability to develop and populate indicator programs; and
  - translation of all of the above into outreach and education materials for a variety of audiences.
- Ensure NOC and fisheries-related EBM efforts are complementary. Fisheries management councils established under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA) have been leaders in the field of ecosystem based management and their work, and related focus on fisheries habitat issues, continues to evolve. NOC staff has reportedly advised that it is researching whether under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), MSFCMA councils, which are not executive branch agencies directly subject to the terms of Executive Order 13547, may participate on the Regional Planning Bodies (RPB) charged with developing CMSPs. Although NMFS, with whom the councils work closely, is on the NOC, statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies do not have a seat at the NOC. It is essential to include the statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies at the decision-making table, in particular at the NOC in addition to the RPB, and we object to the use of the Executive Order in an attempt to supersede or conflict with their legislative authority. The NOC's deliberations must include well-informed representation of fishing interests at all planning and *decision-making stages*. See also related comment regarding objective 2 (coastal and marine spatial planning).

- **Ensure eco-regional assessment serves states' needs.** The NOC should ensure opportunity for coastal states' active involvement in the design and implementation of eco-regional assessments. To optimize the assessments' utility for state coastal managers, the data used needs to be sufficiently detailed to capture the specific environmental conditions in states in a region. For example, use of the National Coastal Condition Assessment, which employs probabilistic (random) sampling, would be problematic. Many states, including Maine, have repeatedly objected to this approach; it enables generalized condition assessments that facilitate comparison of one state to another but it is of limited use in addressing specific, in-state problems that require coastal states' time, attention, and funds.

Medium term:

- **Remove obstacles to federal agencies' consideration of state-produced data.** The NOC should identify obstacles to and develop recommendations for changes in law and policy as needed to facilitate federal agencies' use of state-produced environmental data. Maine DEP, for example, notes that it has had difficulty sharing data with EPA even though it considers the state information superior to that used by EPA.
- **Ensure well-coordinated monitoring efforts.** Assurance of effective monitoring of ocean and coastal resources and key environmental conditions needs to be a centerpiece among NOC's strategies. At present, existing monitoring efforts are not effectively networked and integrated. The NOC, with assistance from the National Research Council, should:
  - inventory existing ocean and coastal resources-related monitoring efforts, particularly those supported with federal funds;
  - review past attempts to establish pertinent national or regional monitoring networks as a source of "lessons learned" and identify and present to state, federal and other statutorily mandated resource management bodies opportunities for coordination among related efforts and for consolidation of closely-related and potentially redundant efforts to optimize use of available funding; and
  - develop means to facilitate consistency and public availability of monitoring data collected, developed, or managed with federal funding support.
- **Address data gaps.** Notable gaps exist in key data about the marine environment and related human uses. The NOC's EBM strategy should include development of a well-concerted federal effort to ensure availability of improved and on-going collection, assessment, and management of offshore data needed to support decision making by both private interests and statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies. For example, seafloor mapping of OCS areas off Maine is sparse. This information is useful in defining ecosystems and identifying suitability for economic opportunities, such as commercial fishing and ocean energy development. In developing this strategy, the NOC should identify key data gaps, inventory current federal programs that support collection

of ocean and coastal data, and identify steps to ensure that federal agencies implement these programs in a manner well coordinated with state and statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies and that optimizes use of available federal resources in filling these data gaps.

Long term:

- Develop in conjunction with statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies and states an on-going federal program to support data collection, assessment, and management. Effective coastal and marine spatial planning will require consideration of and ease of access to the best available data. This necessitates updating and on-going management of information resources. The NOC should develop CZMA-based or other federal programs that provide opportunity for a stable, on-going source of federal funds to help support data collection, assessment, and management and other activities at the state and regional levels that are necessary to ensure the utility and continued refinement of coastal and marine spatial plans.

**Objective 2: "Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning [CMSP]:** Implement comprehensive, integrated, ecosystem-based coastal and marine spatial planning and management in the United States."

Short term:

- Ensure representation of fisheries management-related interests in decision making. Commercial fishing is among the predominant uses of the marine environment and has long provided significant sustainable economic benefits to Maine and the nation as a whole. The MSFCMA provides a statutorily established, science-based framework for management of fishing activities throughout the EEZ by industry, the public, as well as coastal states, which, in turn, manage fishing under constitutional authority in their territorial waters. It is essential that the NOC ensure that CMSP is undertaken with full respect for and recognition of MSFCMA-related, interstate, and state fisheries management decisions, authorities, and responsibilities. As noted above, the NOC's staff has reportedly advised that it is researching whether FACA precludes direct representation of MSFCMA councils on the RPBs established by the NOP. . We find exclusion of the councils from a central role in NOC-related planning and decision making, particularly the NOC itself, unacceptable. In addition, Maine is a member of the ASMFC, which serves as a deliberative body, coordinating the conservation and management of the states shared near shore fishery resources – including lobsters, shrimp and herring – for sustainable use. We strongly urge Presidential amendment of the NOP and associated provisions of regulation, if and as necessary, to ensure full, decision making representation by such statutorily established bodies.
- Avoid unfunded mandates or expectations. At this point, the federal government has provided no additional funds for coastal states, federal agencies, or statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies, to support their involvement in CMSP efforts

under Executive Order 13547. Under these circumstances, we strongly object to any move by the NOC to establish objectives or expectations regarding state participation in development and implementation of CMSP that are not matched with an identified source of federal support. CMSP should not become or be seen as a new unfunded federal mandate or a source of unrealistic public expectations.

- Planning areas. The geographic scope of the planning area on which the regional planning bodies will focus needs to be shaped by and commensurate with the available resources. It may be unworkable and unrealistic in one or more regions to develop a CMSP that includes all marine waters, from estuaries to the limits of the EEZ. We suggest that each region rightfully defer to the relevant statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies and states in defining planning areas to allow its work to reflect regionally specific social, political, and ecological considerations. This flexible approach would reflect and support region-specific issues and make the CMSP effort more efficient and more effective by building on existing efforts and institutions.
- Recognition of sub-regional differences and state autonomy. Provisions for development and implementation of regional CMSPs should ensure that each state retains its autonomy and a co-equal role among states in its region. While Maine has worked well and values its collaboration with neighboring coastal states through NROC and other regional efforts, a number of significant differences exist between Maine's coastal character, the substantially greater length of our coastline, the diverse environmental and ecological conditions, and the greater proportion of our economies being marine resource base, and those of southern New England. A uniform, regional approach to a variety of issues may not be appropriate. The Federal Consistency provision in the CZMA requires that Federal actions that may have reasonably foreseeable effects on any coastal use or resource, either directly or indirectly, be consistent with the enforceable policies of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) approved state coastal management programs. CZMA consistency determinations must be submitted to the state for review to address federal actions that may occur both in and beyond the coastal zone, such as energy projects, which have the potential to impact coastal uses or resources, such as Maine's commercial fisheries. Adhering to the CZMA Federal Consistency provision will help to avoid or reduce long term use-conflicts, as it will allow for each state to be consulted, allowing for sub-regional differences to be addressed including through existing, statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies before activities take place, thus ensuring the success of proposed activities in coastal waters.
- Support necessary stakeholder engagement. The NOC's strategic plan should emphasize the importance of, encourage, and identify additional federal resources to help support the well-informed engagement of statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies, marine harvesters and other public stakeholders in the CMSP process.
- Adopt result-oriented performance measures. CMSP is a process tool; even an excellent plan is not, in and of itself, a sufficient outcome. The NOC should, in consultation with statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies, adopt concrete, action-oriented performance measures, such as reduction of permitting time in pre-planned

areas, renewable ocean energy generation capacity approved for siting, or other measures that by their nature demonstrate efficient, technically-sound, and well-coordinated governmental decision-making that fosters and avoids and minimizes conflict among beneficial uses of our shared marine environment.

- BOEMRE and CMSP. Working to address national renewable energy policy goals, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation, and Enforcement (BOEMRE) is moving forward in cooperation with coastal states to identify OCS areas that may be well-suited to offshore wind energy development. While we do not suggest that BOEMRE in any way slow the progress of its work to facilitate well-sited renewable offshore energy development, the NOC should clarify the relationship between BOEMRE's on-going efforts, including its work with state task forces, and regional planning bodies' efforts to develop CMSPs, with particular attention to how these efforts will be integrated. An agreement between the NOAA and BOEMRE establishing a framework to facilitate coordination on OCS renewable energy development is needed to assist in these goals.

Medium term:

- Concurrent review of the federal governance framework. The NOC should undertake a concerted, interagency federal effort, in conjunction with statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies, to identify and develop recommendations for statutory and regulatory changes to address inefficiencies, conflicts, and other potential obstacles to streamlined, well-coordinated federal decision making regarding renewable ocean energy and other development activities in the marine environment. Proactive preparation of this analysis is necessary for to regional planning bodies in developing realistic CMSPs. Needed improvements in the federal governance framework would facilitate their implementation and effectiveness.

**Objective 4: "Coordinate and Support:** Better coordinate and support Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Improve coordination and integration across the Federal Government and, as appropriate, engage with the international community."

Short term:

- Ensure interagency coordination and collaboration. Effective coordination and assurance of collaboration among federal agencies, states and statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies, and others participating in the CMSP, and all other NOC strategies, is a prerequisite for success. Without the presence at the decision making table - not just advisory boards - for states and statutorily established resource management bodies, this process will fail. Further, the NOC should emphasize the importance of and identify specific tools to authorize and facilitate a coordinated and integrated effort at both the field office and headquarters levels among federal agencies states statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies.

Medium term:

- Optimizing the utility of the NEPA process. The NEPA process offers opportunity for environmental review that supports decision-making by a variety of agencies, states and statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies. An agency's participation in the NEPA process as a cooperating agency (when it is not the lead agency for NEPA review) may ensure that issues are addressed as necessary to support and help streamline its own environmental review, leasing, or permitting decision. The NOC should explore and develop standardized practices for federal agencies' participation as cooperating agencies that are designed to streamline the overall federal environment review, leasing, and permitting process, and for comprehensive, transparent communication between federal agencies, states, statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies and other bodies. Such practices may include a schedule for early identification of all environmental approvals needed for the activity subject to NEPA review and agencies' related information needs, coordination or consolidation of agency review procedures, and development of a detailed schedule for completion of all requisite reviews. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), for example, has developed spatial planning concepts through the identification of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The EFH designations are currently in the final stages of approval at the NEFMC, but they will not be implemented before BOEMRE's offshore wind site identification. Nonetheless, the NEPA review process will rightly allow for the final EFH designations to be submitted as part of a "body of knowledge" in the final site selections for offshore wind, thus providing for a more informed decision making process as well as potentially reducing user-conflicts in the long run.

**Objective 5: "Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification:**

Strengthen resiliency of coastal communities and marine and Great Lakes environments and their abilities to adapt to climate change impacts and ocean acidification."

Short term:

- Support planning and action at all governmental levels. Coastal states are likely to address climate change adaptation issues in a variety of ways through statutorily mandated regional resource management bodies and other instruments at the regional, state, county, and local levels. Therefore, the NOC's strategic plan should recommend provision of available federal funding support for voluntary climate change adaptation-related planning and action at each of these jurisdictional levels as appropriate to meet coastal states' differing needs and approaches. In addition, in developing the plan, the NOC should inventory and ensure coordination among potential federal funding sources, particularly in light of prospects for reduced federal support for state efforts in this area as reflected in the current year federal budget's proposed elimination of EPA funding.

Medium term:

- Identify additional sources of funding. Climate change is driven by forces beyond the control of state, county, and local governments. If addressed ineffectually, its

consequences would manifest locally as loss or degradation of coastal infrastructure. As a whole, such loss and degradation would have significant adverse effects on our nation's economy and quality of life. The NOC should identify and call for provision of additional federal funds that may be used to ensure a well-coordinated and effective national response to this issue through implementation of its strategic plan.

- **Strengthen authorization in CZMA for climate change-related activities.** The NOC should recommend that as reauthorized the CZMA more clearly support provision of funding for voluntary development and implementation of coastal adaptation plans that recognize the individual needs of each state while building into a proactive national strategy. As noted above, such plans may be undertaken at the county or local level.

**Objective 9: "Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Observations, Mapping, and Infrastructure:** Strengthen and integrate Federal and non-Federal ocean observing systems, sensors, data collection platforms, data management, and mapping capabilities into a national system and integrate that system into international observation efforts."

- Augment support for federal OCS-focused ocean observing, data collection, and management. Coastal states' ocean observing and related data collection and management efforts focus primarily on nearshore, state coastal waters. At current funding levels, the Integrated Ocean Observing System is not equipped to meet coastal managers' information needs, particularly as related to OCS areas. The NOC strategy should call for identification of coastal managers' current and projected OCS-oriented data and information needs and existing federal resources available to address those needs, and steps to address current or projected gaps in key information.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and your agency's on-going efforts to engage coastal states and other stakeholders in the development of these strategic plans. We appreciate the opportunities for and evident attention to comments and suggestions provided by Maine and other coastal states to date on related matters and look forward to continued constructive engagement on issues of concern to our state as this planning process moves forward.

Sincerely,



Darryl Brown  
Director, Maine State Planning Office

cc: Carlisle McLean, Office of Maine Governor Paul LePage  
Norman Olsen, Commissioner, Maine Department of Marine Resources  
Patricia Aho, Deputy Commissioner Maine Department of Environmental Protection  
Bill Beardsley, Commissioner, Maine Department of Conservation



**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 29, 2011

Chairwoman Nancy Sutley  
National Ocean Council  
Council on Environmental Quality  
722 Jackson Place, NW.  
Washington, DC 20503

Director John Holdren  
National Ocean Council  
Office of Science and Technology Policy  
725 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Chairwoman Sutley and Director Holdren,

We are writing to comment on the development of Strategic Action Plans for the nine priority objectives identified in the National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, our Coasts, and the Great Lakes, established under Executive Order 13547.

The United States has exclusive environmental and economic jurisdiction over approximately 4.5 million square miles of ocean, which supports 2.3 million jobs and generates more than \$138 billion annually. It has also been projected that nearly 75 percent of the U.S. population will live in coastal counties by 2025. Given the heavy burden that we continue to place on our oceans and coasts, we commend the National Ocean Council for addressing some of the most pressing challenges to ensure healthy oceans for present and future generations.

We offer comments on the nine priority objectives, the development of strategic action plans for said objectives, and examples of opportunities, obstacles, and ways to gauge progress, as follows:

*Ecosystem-Based Management*

This management approach affords the opportunity to preserve and restore ecosystems to ensure that the necessary services they provide will be available now and well into the future. Ecosystem-based management should work to reveal the benefits, including recreational and aesthetic uses, as well as the hidden costs of current and future uses to ensure comprehensive management of our oceans. We cannot afford to overexploit our ocean and coastal resources and to lose ecosystem services that incur costs to society. These services, such as carbon storage or shoreline protection from wetlands, meet critical needs for humans and should be incorporated into management decisions. For example, in Washington and California, the Puget Sound Partnership and Morro Bay Ecosystem-Based Management Program, respectively, assessed tradeoffs between stakeholders and management strategies by linking ecosystem and human health through an ecosystem services based framework. In Massachusetts, the Ocean Act is structured around ecosystem services balancing the compatibility of current ocean uses and

future needs. We encourage you to learn from these programs as you develop this Strategic Action Plan.

### *Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning*

Effective and transparent communication regarding the use of our ocean and coastal areas is vital to coordinating and initiating coastal and marine spatial planning activities without jeopardizing existing or future marine activities. Federal, State, Territorial, Tribal, regional, and local entities must communicate efficiently with each other and the public as our reliance on ocean resources increases, and the National Ocean Policy must serve to coordinate these efforts. The Strategic Action Plan should provide specific guidance for the Regional Planning Bodies on public and stakeholder participation, including defined expectations, establishment of public advisory committees, and ongoing evaluations of the effectiveness of public and stakeholder engagement.

The Massachusetts Ocean Act, for example, established an Ocean Advisory Commission, consisting of State legislators, agency representatives, and stakeholders, and a Science Advisory Council, coordinating six agency work groups, to acquire and analyze existing data and information regarding habitat; fisheries; transportation, navigation, and infrastructure; sediment; recreation and cultural services; and renewable energy. Using this information, the State of Massachusetts was able to request a refinement of the area considered for offshore wind energy development to take into account certain areas identified as important to the fishing industry. These planning efforts were able to reduce conflict and provide certainty for the development of new off-shore energy technologies and for Massachusetts' iconic and vibrant fishing industry. Furthermore, the ability to coordinate and streamline the permitting process for such projects leads to substantial ecological, social, and economic benefits. Only through an open and transparent process will we be able to effectively address these and other pressing ocean issues, like climate change, ocean acidification, and water quality. Additionally, as the National Ocean Policy implementation process continues, it is imperative that the National Ocean Council and the involved agencies highlight examples of successful coastal and marine spatial planning efforts. There is an abundance of misinformation regarding the intention and purpose of coastal and marine spatial planning, and education is key to accomplishing the end goals.

### *Inform Decisions and Improve Understanding*

Adaptive management requires increasing knowledge to continually improve management decisions to ensure the common goals of healthy and productive oceans alongside vibrant coastal communities. The National Estuarine Research Reserve System, including Padilla Bay, Elkhorn Slough, Narragansett Bay, and Waquoit Bay, provide excellent examples of integrating research and education to help communities develop strategies to address coastal resource issues. Specifically, the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve collaborates with partners to conduct coastal and estuarine research and monitoring throughout the Narragansett Bay and makes this data and related education programs and activities available to Rhode Island schools, colleges, and universities to increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of this estuary.

Similarly, the National Estuary Program takes a collaborative, community-wide approach to protecting and restoring watershed and estuary resources. The Morro Bay National Estuary Program in California has partnered with landowners and conservation groups over a period of seven years to develop site-specific best management practices for their properties. Dedicated community members generate valuable long-term water quality data as part of the volunteer monitoring program and work with program staff and scientists at local universities and agencies to improve our understanding of the complex health of the estuary. The estuary program's education efforts range from field trips and presentations to the development of a free, public-friendly estuary center in Morro Bay. When developing this Strategic Action Plan, we encourage the council to support the development of ocean and environmental education and outreach programs, including citizen science-based research projects. Educating the public on these issues will encourage public participation in the policy decision-making process and will ultimately lead to better policy and more effective implementation.

#### *Coordinate and Support*

During these fiscally austere times, it is particularly critical that we reduce duplication and increase efficiency in governmental operations. It is imperative that this effort moves forward from the ground up relying on existing local, regional, Tribal, Territorial, and State programs and entities through a transparent process, which facilitates the direct involvement of stakeholders. Coordinating efforts in permitting processes, as an example, will provide greater clarity for permittees and will reduce time and costs for all stakeholders. The National Ocean Policy must help to coordinate these efforts without adding additional layers of management.

#### *Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration*

Regional ecosystem protection and restoration should be developed within a comprehensive process for defining, identifying, and evaluating areas of ecological importance. For example, through the Marine Life Protection Act, California is in the process of re-designing the state's system of Marine Protected Areas using information from regional stakeholders in the planning process. Three of the five designated regions have been completed with a process involving the public in a variety of ways including direct communication with regional stakeholder group members, attendance at workshops and public meetings, and providing input on public documents and proposals as they are developed.

#### *Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Observations, Mapping, and Infrastructure*

The integration of Federal and non-Federal ocean observing systems, sensors, data collection platforms, data management, and mapping capabilities will provide authoritative, timely, and interoperable data, products, and services to address multiple needs, including for maritime safety, natural hazards mitigation, and environmental protection. This Strategic Action Plan should identify data gaps within these observing systems and additional resources to fill these gaps, expand observations, and outline a system where data is readily accessible to all stakeholders.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on these Strategic Action Plans and to share examples from our States, which demonstrate existing and effective actions to help the Nation

Chairwoman Sutley  
Director Holdren  
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achieve these policy objectives and ensure the balanced use of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. We look forward to working with you as this process moves forward.

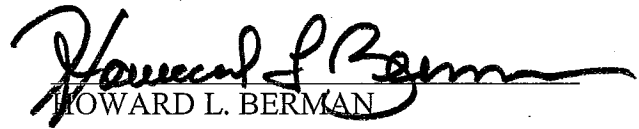
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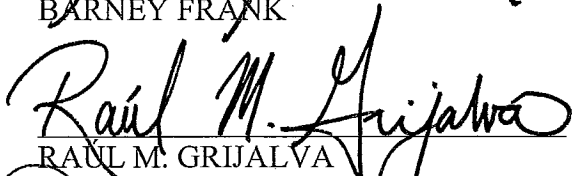
  
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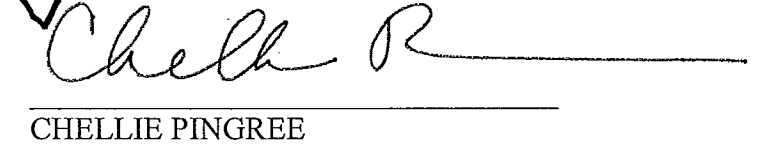
  
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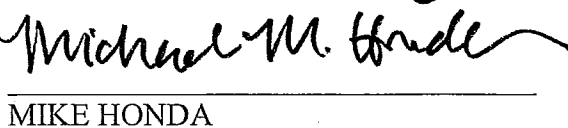
  
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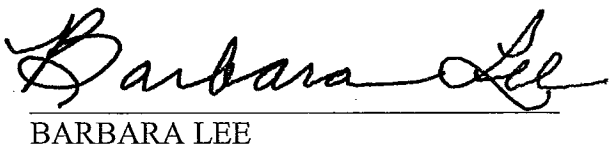
  
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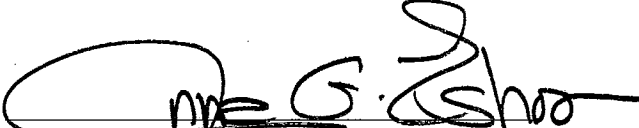
  
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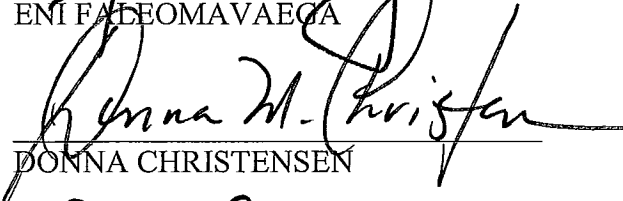
  
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ENI FALEOMAVAEGA

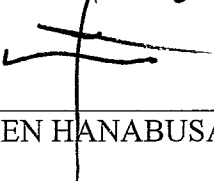
  
ALCEE HASTINGS

  
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April 29, 2011

National Ocean Council  
722 Jackson Place, NW.  
Washington, DC 20503.

Re: Comments on the National Ocean Council's Nine Strategic Action Plans

National Ocean Council Representatives:

The Coastal Treaty Tribes (CTT's), Hoh, Makah, and Quileute Tribes and the Quinault Indian Nation, of the Olympic Coast submit for your consideration comments and recommendations regarding the development of the National Ocean Council's Nine Strategic Action Plans.

We have individually and collectively been consistent in our messages that ocean management in the Pacific Northwest must be inclusive of the four coastal treaty tribes. Our concerns extend to all Nine Priority Objectives as not only does our usual and accustomed fishing grounds in marine waters, but our reservations and communities border the open ocean as well. We have been stewards of our land and waters since time immemorial. Preserving our fish and wildlife resources, as well as access to them, is essential to our economic, cultural, and spiritual well being.

Our legal standing and management status regarding ocean resources and governance is unique. Each of our tribes' has treaty secured hunting and fishing rights with the United States. These treaties retained rights to protect our way of life and reserved rights of hunting, fishing and gathering and are inclusive of our rights to manage and utilize marine resources in perpetuity. We are co-owners with the United States of these marine resources, and our co-management authority is legally recognized to include both state and federal waters. The development of a National Ocean Policy and Strategic Actions Plans must acknowledge and accommodate tribal values and activities with our usual and accustomed areas.

We are encouraged that the inaugural meeting of the Governance Coordinating Committee included identification of the tribes along with the state and federal representatives as co-leads in the Regional Planning bodies. We strongly urge the National Ocean Council to ensure (through communication and funding venues) that tribal participation is a high priority in the development and implementation of the National Ocean Policy. We expect that the Regional Planning Body for the West Coast will be created in keeping with the expressed intent of Executive Order 13547. Furthermore, it is our expectation that our

tribal governments will each have designated seats at the table given our status as sovereigns with treaty resources and management authority in ocean waters.

Specific and dedicated funding will be needed for the CTT's to engage at all levels of the National Ocean Policy. As sovereigns, the CTT's will need to be fully engaged due to their role as managers of the marine resources in order for the Nine Priority Objectives to successfully move forward. Dedicated funding for the CTT's will be especially important within the areas of CMSP, mapping and infrastructure, and resiliency and adaptation to climate change and ocean acidification. Funding is needed for education as well, both to get tribal knowledge out to educators, managers, scientists, and policy experts and to bring education opportunities to tribal communities.

The CTT submit the following for your consideration as the NOC develops the Nine Strategic Action Plans):

**Coordinate and Support:**

- Proper consultation with tribes is vital to the success of implementing the Action Plan and the National Ocean Policy in the northwest as tribal Usual and Accustomed Areas (U & A's) occupy the marine waters north of Point Chehalis to the U.S. Canadian border. We strongly suggest that this action plan will benefit from establishing a formal policy and protocol for consultation and consideration of the tribes at the NOC level. A couple of examples are:
  1. Coordination and Consultation Policy Plan of Action developed by the Environmental Protection Agency <http://www.epa.gov/indian/consultation/index.htm> or:
  2. Work done by National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/tc/>
- All of the action plans need to have a common theme that is in support of the United States governments' responsibility to uphold the treaties established between the federal government and the Coastal Treaty Tribes.

**Ecosystem-Based Management:**

- As stewards of ocean resources for thousands of years, the mainstream shift of marine resource management from single species to ecosystem-based is not a new principle in the management strategies of the coastal tribes. However, in order for Ecosystem-based management to become a fully integrated part of the National Ocean Policy there will need to be the establishment of the following:
  1. Creation of secure financial resources;
  2. The development of standards for data acquisition and processing
  3. Protocols for data and report availability
- In addition, we encourage the NOC to work with the regional fishery management councils and appropriate management authorities to ensure coordination with their existing efforts.

**Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Observations, Mapping, and Infrastructure:**

- This will need to include a strong research component that identifies gaps in data that hinder or limit resource management decisions. With shifts in climate already a reality, it is critical to include a long term monitoring element that will establish both baseline conditions of ocean ecosystems as well as documenting the changes over time. Finally there are numerous assessments and inventories that in the short term can assist in guiding management decisions. Some examples of short term programs are:

1. Complete a data GAP analysis to identify the data needed to bring coastal waters off of Washington to an equal level of available data in Oregon and California coasts.
2. Conduct habitat and coastal current mapping.
3. Develop and complete stock assessments that forward understanding of important stocks at a regional scales.

**Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning:**

- The Regional Planning Bodies for the West Coast Region must include seats for tribal representatives as the CTT will be directly affected by CMSP. In short, planning for implementation of NOP or CMSP cannot occur off the Olympic Peninsula without each of the 4 coastal sovereign tribes being part of the discussion and planning.
- Currently, it appears that the NOC views the West Coast Governors Agreement on Ocean Health (WCGAOH) as the potential entity for the regional ocean partnership for the west coast region. This is not acceptable because WCGAOH does not satisfy the terms of a ROP as described by the NOC and most importantly, because the tribes are not part of the WCGAOH.
- As with the west coast states the CTT will require dedicated funding for the duration of the planning effort for coastal and marine spatial planning. Expecting the tribes to access funding through a competitive grant process wrongly puts the needs of tribal ocean policy and management as sovereigns in competition with stakeholders who already have a voice through their state elected officials.

**Resiliency and Adaptation to Climate Change and Ocean Acidification:**

- Tribes and coastal communities are experiencing climate change now, not only are resources affected by climate change but also the characteristics of the regions culture as well. Tribes can offer a unique perspective to how the NOC addresses Climate Change within the National Ocean Policy for our region.
- The effects of ocean acidification on the exercise of treaty rights to harvest marine resources both commercially and for subsistence are largely unknown. Tribal communities rely on these resources for our cultural and economic wellbeing. The potential changes or impacts as a result ocean acidification is beyond comprehension.

**Regional Ecosystem Protection and Restoration:**

- The large size of each of the regions indentified by NOC must be taken into consideration. As we stated in earlier correspondence: the "West Coast Region" may be too large; we must remember that the "large California current ecosystem" is the result of multiple smaller systems that function with some independence.
- Dedicated financial support for understanding the chemical and biological relevance of these sub-systems would help ensure that conservation and restoration efforts are effectively distributed. Effective distribution must be based on sound science so that areas of low population and high need do not lose out to areas of high population.

**Inform Decisions and Improve Understanding:**

- While not always considered, local knowledge such as that preserved in Tribal cultures can provide information that is not available elsewhere, to inform management decisions


The CTT would like to reiterate their support for the National Ocean Council and its critical role in implementing the National Ocean Policy. Thank you for this opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with the Council as you draft the Strategic Action Plans.




Sincerely,

Coastal Treaty Tribes of the Olympic Coast

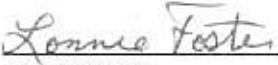
Hoh Indian Tribe

  
David Hudson

Makah Tribe

  
Micah McCarty

Quileute Tribe

  
Lonnie Foster

Quinault Indian Nation

  
Ed Johnstone



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April 29, 2011

National Ocean Council  
Nancy Sutley, Co-Chair  
Dr. John P. Holdren, Co-Chair  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Ms. Sutley and Dr. Holdren:

As the nation's largest organization of recreational boaters, with over one-half a million members nationwide, BoatU.S., the Boat Owners Association of The United States, appreciates the opportunity to comment on National Ocean Council's strategic action plans. Recreational boating is a significant contributor to our nation's economy and society. It supported \$30.4 billion of economic activity in 2010 and nearly 300,000 jobs. Boating is one of the most popular outdoor family activities with 75 million participants last year and can be a key element in achieving the objectives of the America's Great Outdoors initiative.

We have reviewed the Council's nine priority objectives and are pleased to provide our views on some of the proposed actions.

1. Ecosystem-Based Management: Adopt ecosystem-based management as a foundational principle for the comprehensive management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.

Management actions must consider current uses as their starting point. While it is laudable to take a holistic approach to management of marine resources, it must be recognized that there are many long-standing stakeholders who will want to see tangible benefits from policy prescriptions. Management actions undertaken to implement ecosystem-based management must be based in firm science coupled with public input from those stakeholder most affected. Such actions must receive periodic reviews of their effectiveness from both a socio-economic and scientific perspective with timely reports to stakeholders and the public.

Any actions undertaken in pursuit of this goal must guarantee public access to marine resources for both consumptive and non-consumptive uses. For any ecosystem-based management policy prescriptions to achieve support from the boating public will require as few restrictions as possible on how they currently enjoy their boating activities.

Participation rates in the various recreational boating activities would provide a gauge of the impact of new management practices. Thoughtful use of consumer surveys, market

research and public data such as boat registration and fishing licenses sales could provide valuable insight to inform regional planning efforts.

A particularly tangible measure of participation in boating and fishing is revenue generated for the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund (SFRBTF), long supported by the boating and angling communities. These funds are generated by taxes placed on fishing tackle and equipment, motorboat fuel, imported boats and fishing equipment, and small engines. These funds are then directly used to support a myriad of aquatic resources conservation programs, boating access and infrastructure, and aquatic education programs.

2. Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning: Implement comprehensive, integrated, ecosystem-based coastal and marine spatial planning and management in the United States.

Maine spatial plans should reflect a bias for shared use of resources among a wide range of stakeholders. While certain user groups may seek to create exclusive use areas (security zones, no-take areas, energy extraction, etc...) marine spatial plans must be based on the premises that our oceans, lakes and rivers are held in common by all citizens. The development of these plans must provide ample opportunity for recreational boating stakeholder input. It should also be noted that the full range of recreational users should be consulted, not just one "recreational" representative i.e. beach-goers would not represent the interests of power-boaters particularly well.

In order for CMSP to receive recreational boating stakeholder support the benefits of such activities must be clearly articulated. Without a clear understanding of what CMSP is and is not, boaters will likely draw the conclusion that such planning is only being undertaken to exclude them from large areas to which they currently have access or in some ill-define objective of "protection."

3. Inform Decisions and Improve Understanding: Increase knowledge to continually inform and improve management and policy decisions and the capacity to respond to change and challenges. Better educate the public through formal and informal programs about the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.

The recreational boating community could support policy initiatives based upon objective science. If they perceive that a particular policy action is being undertaken based on agenda-driven science they will strongly object. If policies are put in place to restrict activities with the objective of achieving a particular goal, catch limits to rebuild fish stocks for example, a mechanism for periodic review and revision of the restrictions must be in place.

Recreational boating has a long-standing history of supporting marine education. As the direct beneficiaries of clean water, vibrant ecosystems, and abundant fish populations, boaters have a keen appreciation for these resources. Support for recreational boating in decision making will expose a broader cross-section of the public to the aquatic

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environment, enhancing their understanding and appreciation while building advocates, not adversaries, for broader National Ocean Policy goals.

4. **Coordinate and Support:** Better coordinate and support Federal, State, tribal, local, and regional management of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. Improve coordination and integration across the Federal Government and, as appropriate, engage with the international community.

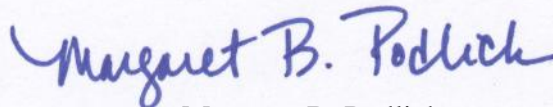
The recreational boating community supports this policy objective. Particular emphasis should be placed on the coordination of the various, often duplicative, permitting regimes now required to complete boating access projects. National guidance to regional planning councils should also be used to promote uniformity in management policies among the various agencies.

9. **Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Observations, Mapping, and Infrastructure:** Strengthen and integrate Federal and non-Federal ocean observing systems, sensors, data collection platforms, data management, and mapping capabilities into a national system and integrate that system into international observation efforts.

The full range of observation and mapping functions of Federal agencies along with state, local and tribal undertakings in this field is strongly supported by the recreational boating community. As consumers of many of these products (weather reports, navigation charts, tide and current tables, etc...) we have direct interest in the promotion of these efforts. In particular we would encourage emphasis on making these products widely available in forms that are usable in day-to-day operation of recreational boats.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our views on the strategic objectives of the National Ocean Council. Please call upon us at anytime to provide the perspective of recreational boaters as this effort moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Margaret B. Podlich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Margaret B. Podlich  
Vice-President, Government Affairs