

February 8, 2010

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of the millions of members of our diverse organizations, we thank you for calling for a unified national ocean, coastal, islands and Great Lakes policy and an effective marine spatial planning framework. The recommendation for establishing a coordinating national ocean policy was made by both the Pew Oceans Commission and the congressionally established U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. Hundreds of scientists have also called for an ecosystem-based approach to managing our oceans. We commend you for your strong leadership in developing a policy that makes stewardship the foundation of the nation's public trust in our marine and Great Lakes ecosystems.

Our oceans, coasts, Pacific Islands and Great Lakes are not just places of wonder and beauty -- they are economic engines that provide valuable jobs, food, energy resources, recreational and tourism opportunities. The U.S. ocean economy provides more jobs and more economic output than the entire farm sector.<sup>1</sup> The latest data on U.S. ocean sector industries reveals that more than 2 million jobs and over \$128 billion in GDP annually results from just ocean tourism, recreation, and living resources.<sup>2</sup> Protecting our oceans is a vital means of helping to restore our economy and jobs.

Oceans are also a central part of the global climate system, and provide healthy seafood for a hungry world population. Our ocean and coastal waters are a valuable public resource, providing habitat for an incredible array of fish and wildlife. These waters have been central to our way of life as a maritime nation for generations. Healthy oceans, coasts and communities represent our heritage and our future.

As you know, ocean resources are currently managed by more than twenty federal agencies and administered through a web of more than 140 different and often conflicting laws and regulations. This complex legal system often results in inadequate management of public and private activities, such as pollution control, fishing and shipping. A strong national policy would help to untangle the regulatory jumble by guiding and coordinating the work of all government agencies and their activities affecting ocean resource management. Such a policy would also better address the regional concerns heard by your Ocean Policy Task Force during the public hearings held just this past fall -- including issues ranging from the Arctic to climate change-related impacts on the West Coast, offshore energy concerns on the East Coast, calls for inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the Pacific Islands, concern for wetlands restoration in the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes' struggles with destructive invasive species.

This policy would also be one that holds conservation as a central principle. As your June 12<sup>th</sup> memo clearly stated, "We have a stewardship responsibility to maintain healthy, resilient, and sustainable oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes resources for the benefit of this and future generations." While we have many laws and policies geared toward multiple uses, the purpose of this policy is to establish a conservation standard to guide stewardship of our great waters now and into the future.

Again, we thank you for your leadership and urge you to realize the full promise of a strong national ocean, coastal and Great Lakes policy. We look forward to an Executive Order that protects, maintains and restores these valuable ecosystems for the millions of Americans who enjoy and depend upon them.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (USCOP). 2004. An Ocean Blueprint for the 21 Century: Final Report. Washington, D.C., p. 31. Available at: <http://www.oceancommission.gov>.

<sup>2</sup> National Ocean Economics Program. 2004. "Market Data: Ocean Economy Data." Accessed July, 30 2009. Available at: <http://www.oceaneconomics.org/Market/ocean/oceanEcon.asp>. Note: GDP and employment statistics include multipliers.

Blue Frontier Campaign  
Caribbean Conservation Corp  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Conservation Law Foundation  
Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition  
Green Fire Productions  
Gulf Restoration Network  
Indian Riverkeeper  
NRDC  
Ocean Conservancy  
Pew Environment Group  
**Mass Audubon**  
Marine Conservation Biology Institute  
Monterey Bay Aquarium  
Ocean Champions  
Ocean Conservancy  
Reef Relief  
Salmon Protection and Watershed Network  
San Diego Coastkeepers  
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Surfrider  
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