

# **Joint Ocean Commission Initiative**

www.jointoceancommission.org

For Immediate Release  
December 19, 2005

Contact:  
David Roscow  
703/276-2772 x21

## **One Year After President Bush's US Ocean Action Plan**

### **Bipartisan Initiative Urges Accelerated Action on Ocean Policy Reform and Increased Federal Investment**

#### **More Progress on Commission Recommendations Needed**

Washington, DC--- Our nation must address the growing problems that continue to plague our nation's oceans and coasts through an increased commitment to federal funding and a comprehensive, long-term strategy for a national ocean policy that ties in all levels of government.

This message was sent today by the chairs of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative: Admiral James D. Watkins (Ret.), chairman of the US Commission on Ocean Policy; and the Honorable Leon E. Panetta, chairman of the independent Pew Oceans Commission, on the one year anniversary of President Bush's US Ocean Action Plan. As a big part of the problem Watkins and Panetta pointed to a lack of understanding and appreciation of this precious natural resource.

The President's action plan was established in response to the Congressionally mandated and Presidentially appointed US Commission on Ocean Policy recommendations for the development and implementation of a new national ocean policy. The U.S. Commission's report followed the release of a similar report by the privately funded Pew Oceans Commission.

"More Action is needed now — to implement a national strategy to protect, maintain and restore the nation's priceless economic and ecological assets -- our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes," said Watkins. "We need a more coherent strategy if we hope to predict, avoid or minimize the challenges facing our oceans and coasts. We must accelerate the implementation of and increase the funding for policies and science that will help protect and enhance the value of the oceans for the long haul, before it is too late."

The Joint Initiative acknowledges that there has been progress towards implementing a comprehensive national ocean policy. Most notable is the President's establishment of the Secretarial level Committee on Ocean Policy within the Council on Environmental Quality. In addition, more than 50 ocean-related bills have been introduced in Congress ranging from issue-specific legislation -- such as tsunami preparedness -- to comprehensive legislation that addresses a broad suite of ocean and coastal issues. In addition, there has been considerable activity by various states and regions acting on the Commissions recommendations.

- more -

## Page 2 US Ocean Action Plan Anniversary

In a similar vein, Panetta stated that there has been some progress, but emphasized that we need to pick up the pace. “It is unlikely that any ocean-related legislation will be enacted into law before Congress departs for the year, and funding has stagnated when all evidence indicates that proactive investment now will help avoid the risk of incurring greater short- and long-term economic and ecological losses. This year’s devastating hurricane season more than underscored these risks. The failure to act expeditiously on these recommendations threatens the economic and ecological health of our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes, whose resources and services are fundamental contributors to the U.S. economy, national security, and quality of life.”

Both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission recommended a new approach for a national ocean policy, based on the concept of ecosystem-based management. Ecosystem-based management is a system for governing or managing human activities that recognizes and is responsive to the needs of the natural ecosystem, and that considers the links between different living and nonliving components of the land, sea, and atmosphere, including man. Both Commissions emphasized that an increase in federal funding for ocean policies is critical, including a doubling in funding for ocean science and support for monitoring and observation systems.

“The FY’06 budget recently passed by Congress includes very little improvement in funding for ocean-related issues; however, we remain hopeful and expect a stronger federal commitment to oceans in the President’s FY’07 budget request,” Watkins continued. “The opportunity is here, we need to grab it before it is too late and lose the momentum that has been generated over the past couple of years.”

The primary goal of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is to help accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform. The Initiative will realize this goal by tapping into and working closely with networks of people involved in local, state, and regional ocean issues, thereby facilitating progress in the regions while building durable support for the Initiative’s national priorities. The Initiative also will pursue movement on select national ocean policy issues based on the Commissions’ core priorities.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is uniquely positioned to help accelerate the pace of positive change. The Commissioners involved bring extraordinary expertise, perspective, relationships, and diversity of interest to ocean and coastal policy reform. This foundation can serve as the basis for a greatly expanded understanding of the critical issues facing our oceans and action at regional and national levels to address these problems.

For more information please visit [www.jointoceancommission.org](http://www.jointoceancommission.org)

###