

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 10, 2007

Contact:
Colleen Chapman, 202/293-6200, ext. 213
Peter Hill, 202/448-1249

OCEANS PART OF CLIMATE PROBLEM, MUST BE PART OF SOLUTION

Washington, DC – At a congressional hearing today on ocean acidification, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative co-chair Admiral James D. Watkins (U.S. Navy, retired) testified that oceans play a fundamental role in climate change – a role that efforts to address global warming must take into account if they are to be successful.

“We’re all fighting the global disease of climate change. Oceans are a key driver of global climate processes and as a result are suffering from symptoms of the disease, such as elevated temperature and increasing acidification.” said Admiral Watkins. “Efforts to treat the disease must address the role of oceans or the diagnosis will be incomplete and the healing process delayed.”

The Admiral testified that the oceans are a sink for most of the planet’s heat and carbon dioxide. And climate-related changes like acidification and melting ice caps are having an enormous impact on the oceans. But while we know these relationships exist, we lack the in-depth scientific information necessary to fully understand how they work and the impacts they will have on our environment and economy. Efforts to address global warming are being stymied by the lack a coordinated strategy, due in large part to fragmented responsibility among many federal agencies and congressional committees.

An effective solution to climate change begins with two steps. First, Congress can help boost our understanding of the ocean-climate connection by fully funding a science strategy focused on improving our capacity to understand, monitor and predict climate-related changes in the ocean and along the coasts. This will ensure we have the data needed to make informed and balanced decisions regarding efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Second, we need an interagency climate change response office to coordinate federal agency collaboration and expand the participation of scientific experts in the private sector.

“These two concrete steps will go a long way toward arming us to fight climate change,” said the Admiral. “Without better scientific information and a unified system for managing climate change efforts, we’ll be fighting global warming with both arms tied behind our back.”

Full text of Admiral Watkins’ testimony is available online at www.jointoceancommission.org.

###

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission to catalyze ocean policy reform. The Initiative is guided by a ten-member Task Force, five from each Commission,

and led by Admiral James D. Watkins and the Honorable Leon E. Panetta, chairs of the U.S. Commission and Pew Commission, respectively. The primary goal of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform. For more information, visit www.jointoceancommission.org