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## State's Making Ocean and Coastal Health a Priority

### *Comprehensive Initiatives Protecting Economic and Natural Resources*

**Washington, D.C.** – Safeguarding our oceans and ocean health has become a priority in every region of the country, from New England to the Gulf of Mexico to California. A new report released by the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, *An Agenda for Action: Moving Regional Ocean Governance from Theory to Practice*, demonstrates how state and federal officials can come together to protect the country's economic and natural resources through regional approaches to marine resource management.

The report reinforces the efforts of regional ocean governance initiatives by providing straightforward and practical recommendations to assist coastal regions across the country in their efforts toward regional ocean governance. The report also demonstrates that, through regional ocean governance, state and the federal governments, along with the broader ocean community, can work together to solve common ocean and coastal issues.

"States are making real and sustainable progress in the protection of our coastlines and the critical resources they provide," said Leon E. Panetta, co-chair of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative. "But, there is still a long way to go. The *Agenda for Action* spells out concrete steps that our leaders can take to bring the current puzzle pieces of laws and regulations together to create a complete picture of ocean health."

"There's so much innovative work going on at the state and regional level toward better management of our oceans," said Julie Packard, executive director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which hosted the gathering of ocean governance officials in March 2007 from which the *Agenda for Action* was developed. "By sharing successes from across the country, there's a great opportunity to improve ocean management quickly, and in ways that will make a real difference for the future of the oceans."

Recommendations in the *Agenda for Action* call for:

- **Strong Leadership** – State and local officials, governors, leadership institutes and Congress must all work together and create strong new ocean management structures.
- **Successful Regional Mechanisms** – Ocean governance initiatives must strive to be accountable, sustainable and effective in improving the decision-making process on issues that effect ocean and coastal resources.

- **Productive State-Federal Partnerships** – Successful initiatives should work from the “bottom up,” but require sufficient and continuous support from the federal level.
- **Practical Tools** – Effective technology, tools and techniques must be in place for regional initiatives to competently carry out the day-to-day work of ocean governance.
- **Essential Knowledge** – Leaders must strive to gather the most up to date information.
- **Effective Communication** – To effectively work together, leaders must develop a unified vision, message and communications approach to ocean governance.

“Our oceans and Great Lakes cross state boundaries and so must our efforts to protect them,” said Admiral James D. Watkins, former Chief of Naval Operations under President Reagan, now co-chair of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative. “By implementing the recommendations of the report our state and federal leaders can work together and with the diverse public and private interests with a stake in our oceans and Great Lakes to make a real difference in protecting the resources that are vital to us all.”

To view the full text of *An Agenda for Action: Moving Regional Ocean Governance from Theory to Practice*, please visit [www.jointoceancommission.org](http://www.jointoceancommission.org).

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*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](http://www.jointoceancommission.org)*