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Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Applauds Governors' Efforts to Protect and Preserve the Health of the West Coast

California, Oregon, and Washington release Draft Action Plan to Implement West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health

Washington, DC – The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative congratulates West Coast governors on the release a draft action plan to further implementation of the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health. The draft plan was produced after gathering public input and is intended to address the priorities identified in the Governors' agreement and help local and state governments in California, Oregon, and Washington State protect the ecological and economic value of ocean and coastal areas along the West Coast.

"The Joint Initiative applauds California, Oregon, and Washington for taking critical steps toward implementing sound ocean and coastal policies. This was a landmark agreement by the governors and they have now put teeth into their efforts," said Leon E. Panetta, co-chair of the Joint Initiative. "This draft action plan clearly identifies priorities and outlines specific actions that are responsive to the protection and preservation of our ocean's health and the ecological and economic vitality of our coastal communities," Panetta continued.

In September 2006, the three West Coast governors entered into an agreement that identified seven issues that could be addressed more effectively if the states collaborated with one another. The priority issues identified were:

1. Clean coastal waters and beaches
2. Healthy ocean and coastal habitat
3. Ecosystem-based management implementation
4. Reduced impacts of off-shore development
5. Expand ocean and coastal scientific information, research and monitoring
6. Increased ocean awareness among the region's citizens
7. Sustainable economic development of coastal communities

The West Coast Governor's Agreement on Ocean Health Draft Action Plan outlines the vision articulated in the governors' agreement, the goals for meeting that vision, and suggests the actions and timeframes necessary to fully implement the agreement. For example, the plan addresses a number of issues, including: implementing ecosystem-based management; preparing for the effects of climate

change; addressing polluted runoff; supporting research needs; and establishing a national ocean trust fund that would provide sustained funding for ocean and coastal management. Public comment on the draft action plan is invited through December 1, 2007 and can be submitted at www.westcoastoceans.gov.

“Protecting our oceans and coasts starts at the state and local level,” Admiral James D. Watkins, co-chair of the Joint Initiative said. “But it is also critically important that states work collaboratively to manage ocean and coastal resources that they share and to manage activities that impact oceans on an ecosystem basis. This draft action plan is an important step toward protecting the health of the West Coast’s ocean and coastal ecosystems and the economies that depend upon them,” Watkins continued.

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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.