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Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Calls for Immediate Action to Address Ocean Concerns in Climate, Economic and Energy Policy

Recommendations Urge Administration and Congressional Leaders to Protect the Health and Our Ocean and Coastal Ecosystems and Economies

April 7, 2009 (Washington, D.C.) – The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative today released an urgent set of recommendations, “*Changing Oceans, Changing World: Ocean Priorities for the Administration and Congress.*” The recommendations incorporate input from leaders at some of the most respected and influential ocean and coastal policy and science organizations in the country.

The Joint Initiative identifies specific actions the Obama Administration and Congress should take within two to four years to improve ocean and coastal policy, management, science and funding, emphasizing their contributions toward addressing pressing national challenges of climate change, energy security and reviving the economy.

“Our continuing complacency in the face of rising threats to the health and economic viability of our oceans and coasts from climate change, pollution and intense coastal development is no longer tolerable,” said Admiral James D. Watkins (U.S. Navy, Ret.), co-chair of the Joint Initiative. “Unless we commit to advancing our understanding, management and conservation of oceans and coasts, I am afraid the result will be enduring, and perhaps irreversible, changes that will jeopardize their contributions to this and future generations.”

“Our oceans and coasts together are one of the biggest drivers of the U.S. economy,” stated Bill Ruckelshaus, former administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and Joint Initiative commissioner. “Improvements in ocean policy are absolutely critical if we are to restore the economy anytime soon.”

The impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, ocean acidification, and increased coastal flooding and erosion accompanying more intense storms, threaten private and public infrastructure and ecosystems, decreasing revenue from coastal industries and generating staggering costs for recovery efforts. Economic activity in coastal watershed counties, where well over half the nation’s population resides,

contributes approximately 68 percent, or \$7.8 trillion, of the nation's GDP. Ocean-dependent industries such as fishing, shipping and offshore energy generate approximately \$138 billion for the United States each year, which is 2.5 times more than the agriculture industry. These contributions will be in jeopardy as climate change impacts along our coasts become more prevalent.

The Joint Initiative's recommendations in "*Changing Oceans, Changing World: Ocean Priorities for the Administration and Congress*" include specific directives to establish a national ocean policy, strengthen the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, reauthorize the Coastal Zone Management Act, integrate ocean science into broader climate change, energy and economic initiatives, and renew the nation's leadership in international ocean policy. These actions will require increased funding for ocean science, management and education, and will have widespread benefits.

For a full list of the specific recommendations included in the Joint Initiative's "*Changing Oceans, Changing World: Ocean Priorities for the Administration and Congress*," please visit 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. The primary goal of the Joint Initiative is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform.