

The Honorable John Sununu
The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Senate Subcommittee on National Ocean Policy Study
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

May 11, 2006

Chairman Sununu and Senator Boxer:

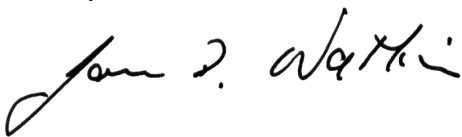
Early June will be an active month for the ocean community in Washington, D.C., with a major conference on ocean education scheduled for the week of June 5 and Capitol Hill Oceans Week scheduled for the week of June 12. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative will also release our response to your request for high-priority congressional actions during the week of June 12. We suggest that the National Ocean Policy Study capitalize on these events by holding a hearing, preferably on Thursday, June 15, to highlight the need for national and regional ocean governance reform.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative has identified both national and regional governance reform as high priority areas. Our ocean and coastal ecosystems are suffering from increasing stress associated with a growing coastal population. Much of our failure to manage our ocean and coastal activities more effectively lies in the limited capacity of current governance structures to support an integrated, ecosystem-based approach. Individual and sector-specific impacts, such as agriculture and urban runoff, are combining to create cumulative impacts that are overwhelming ecosystems. This growing problem is exacerbated by managers' inability to address these impacts comprehensively.

A hearing on national and regional ocean policy reform would allow the National Ocean Policy Study to explore options for improving national and regional governance regimes by soliciting testimony from leaders in national, regional, and state governments, as well as the private sector and others concerned about ocean governance. Initiating a national dialogue on opportunities to address governance reform would be well received by the ocean community and the growing number of constituents concerned about the health of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

The National Ocean Policy Study, with its cross-cutting membership, is in a unique position to take a leadership role in addressing this critical, complex issue. We hope that you will consider holding a hearing on the need for national and regional ocean policy reform the week of June 12. Please contact Laura Cantal at the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (202-354-6444) if you require additional information.

Sincerely,



James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy



The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission