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JOINT INITIATIVE CO-CHAIRS LEAD OFF CONGRESSIONAL OCEAN POLICY HEARING

Washington, DC – At a congressional hearing today on developing a national ocean policy, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative co-chairs former White House Chief of Staff Leon E. Panetta and former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James D. Watkins (U.S. Navy, retired) delivered testimony outlining the steps Congress must take to address the threats facing our oceans and underscoring the close ties between ocean policy and other critical issues like climate change.

“The ‘convenient truth’ is that oceans and climate change are closely linked, and we can make real progress responding to climate change by improving our management of the oceans,” said Panetta.

Panetta and Watkins commended Congress and the Bush Administration for recent actions to reform fisheries law and conserve protected areas. Their testimony (full text available online at www.jointoceancommission.org) also highlighted opportunities for immediate progress, including:

- Recognize the critical links between oceans and climate change, by ensuring that ocean science is a core component of any federal climate policy legislation
- Support regional efforts to develop ocean protection mechanisms that cross state lines and allow better coordination of federal and state programs;
- Demonstrate international leadership by acceding to the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea;
- Invest the necessary resources by increasing appropriations for key oceans programs and establishing a federal Ocean Trust Fund.

“We’ve provided a blueprint, with specific steps federal officials can take to improve the conservation and management of our oceans,” said Watkins. “The fate of our oceans depends on Congress and the administration acting now, not later.”

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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

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