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Joint Initiative Applauds Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force Recommendations

White House Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force final recommendations call for a strong national ocean policy to protect, maintain, and restore U.S. oceans, coasts and Great Lakes

Statement from the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative:

July 19, 2010 (Washington, D.C.) – The White House announced today a new national ocean policy as part of the release of the final recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force. The recommendations call for the creation of a national ocean policy supported by a strong federal coordinating structure with clear leadership, robust regional partnerships, and an effective implementation strategy. The Joint Initiative commends the Obama Administration and the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force for this important action taken to improve our nation’s ability to prevent and respond to natural and manmade disasters, including oil spills and hurricanes, while ensuring that our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes are protected and managed in a sustainable and efficient way.

“Our oceans and coasts are in crisis. With these recommendations, the President has made it clear that he understands the urgency of the situation and has identified our oceans and coasts as a national priority,” stated Bill Ruckelshaus, co-chair of the newly established Joint Initiative Leadership Council.

President Obama established the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force over a year ago, recognizing the urgent need for a national ocean policy to improve government oversight and enhance protection of these vital resources. Recent events in the Gulf of Mexico dramatically underscore the need for this policy to provide a common vision for ocean management in the United States. Currently, our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes are governed by more than 140 laws and 20 different federal agencies, resulting in confusing and often conflicting management responsibilities. Put into practice, a national ocean policy would move management away from the current single-issue focus toward an integrated approach that will help government at all levels better manage ocean and coastal resources for the benefit of the nation, improve oversight, and help eliminate overlapping responsibilities. By providing a consistent policy across federal agencies and a clear

delineation of responsibilities, the policy would reduce the risk of major accidents like the Gulf oil spill while at the same time improve disaster response and recovery.

A national ocean policy supported by an effective strategy for coordination among federal agencies and a dedicated funding source was a primary recommendation of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission. The Joint Initiative continues to champion the increasingly urgent need for establishing a national ocean policy and praises the recommendations by the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force to establish a strong, cohesive, and effective system to manage our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Norm Mineta, co-chair of the Joint Initiative Leadership Council, said, "We applaud the strong recommendations of the Task Force. Our nation urgently needs a more effective way for federal, state, and local governments to coordinate efforts on managing our valuable ocean and coastal resources. And we need a dedicated source of funding to do this, and to do it right."

The Joint Initiative stands ready to work with the Administration as it moves forward on implementing a strong national ocean policy to protect and restore our ocean and coastal ecosystems so they will be healthy, resilient, and capable of providing the goods and services that people want. For more information on the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and our work, please visit www.jointoceancommission.org or contact Laura Cantral at 202-354-6444.

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.