

February 1, 2006

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The purpose of this letter is to present our assessment of progress toward implementing the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission, as well as the actions described in the Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan. You will find enclosed information that highlights where progress has been made and where additional effort is necessary.

As chairmen of two separate independent Commissions that made substantial recommendations for reforming how our nation manages our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, we are working with our fellow Commissioners as the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative to encourage action and track progress. Our shared commitment to ensuring that this nation establish and implement a coherent national ocean policy is grounded in our firm belief that ocean ecosystems are crucial not only to the economic well-being of the nation, but also to human health and our standard of living, both now and in the future.

It has been over a year since the Administration released the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, its response to the U.S. Commission's report. We greatly appreciate the efforts to date of the Administration, the Congress, and a growing number of coastal states, but feel strongly that these actions are proceeding at a pace that does not reflect the urgency of the situation. We are concerned that the slow rate of progress implementing necessary reforms and very limited funding support are jeopardizing a rare opportunity for this nation to make fundamental changes in ocean policy. Such changes are essential if we are to avoid substantial and possibly irreversible degradation of the health and productivity our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

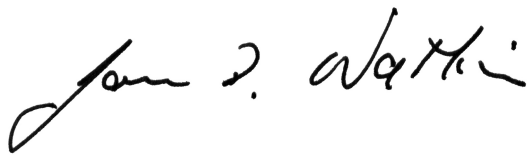
The objective of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative in developing the enclosed U.S. Ocean Policy Report Card is to inform policymakers and the public of the critical challenges facing our oceans, while identifying the many opportunities that are ripe for action. We must unify our nation with a common goal of protecting and restoring our ocean and coastal ecosystems so that they will continue to be healthy and resilient and able to provide the goods and services that people want and need.

Meaningful ocean policy reform will require a significant shift in the current ocean governance regime. Today's challenges require greater integration and coordination among the multitude of federal, state, and local government agencies with jurisdiction over our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. Further, additional investments in ocean research, science, and education are

necessary if we are to significantly improve our collective capacity to move toward an ecosystem-based management approach that simultaneously considers and balances the needs of society with the need for healthy, vital, and productive ocean and coastal ecosystems.

Our fellow Commissioners join us in our commitment to providing constructive assistance to all entities—federal, state, and local governments, as well as nongovernmental, academic, and private sector interests—dedicated to moving our nation toward a better coordinated and more comprehensive national ocean policy, with an improved governance framework and enhanced tools to carry out that policy.

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

cc: Chairman, White House Committee on Ocean Policy
Senate and House Leadership and Select Members
Governors of Coastal States and Territories