

January 30, 2007

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 the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative's second annual assessment of the nation's 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. The objective of the 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.

As chairmen of two Commissions that made remarkably similar 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 monitor progress. Our shared commitment to achieving a coherent and coordinated national ocean policy is grounded in our firm belief that healthy and vibrant ocean and coastal ecosystems are crucial to our sustained economic well-being, public health, and standard of living, both now and in the future.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Administration and your personal commitment to our nation's oceans and coasts, which was clearly demonstrated by the designation of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument and your support for the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. We also applaud the continuing efforts of the Committee on Ocean Policy and its Chairman, Jim Connaughton. The release of the *Ocean Research Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy* is a notable achievement, and we will work with Jim and Jack Marburger to ensure that it is fully implemented.

Despite recent actions at all levels of government, ocean policy reform is not proceeding at a pace commensurate with the urgency of the situation, and the progress that is being made is constrained by limited funding support. Severe problems are threatening the health of our nation's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, including:

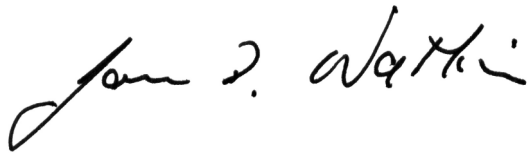
- Enormous human, environmental, and economic impacts associated with increasingly severe and frequent coastal storms
- Continuing fisheries stock failures
- Increasing frequency and intensity of harmful algal blooms

- Massive dead zones in the Chesapeake Bay, the Gulf of Mexico, and most recently off the coast of Oregon
- Growing threats related to invasive species
- Continuing loss of coral reefs

These problems are further exacerbated by ecological shifts driven by global climate change, including disturbing news about the increasing acidification of our oceans. While it is clear that the oceans and climate are deeply linked, the critical role oceans play in climate change is not being adequately addressed. Our failure to increase ocean science investments to learn more about this link and how to manage its impacts is a serious oversight that we hope you can help to highlight and work with Congress and the Governors to resolve.

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
Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy