

**The Joint Ocean
Commission Initiative
Leadership Council**

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The Honorable Leon E.
Panetta

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

October 18, 2010

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the newly formed Leadership Council of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative we enthusiastically applaud your vision and foresight in establishing a National Ocean Policy through Executive Order 13547. Now that a coherent policy has been articulated, we ask you to affirm your commitment to implementing this vision and secure your ocean legacy by including adequate funding in the FY 2012 budget request for ocean and coastal programs. Increased funding in the FY 2012 budget will be instrumental in supporting a determined effort by federal agencies and their partners to implement the priorities identified in your Executive Order. As the FY 2012 budget proposal is developed, we recommend a particular focus on three priority areas:

- 1) Establish an Ocean Investment Fund
- 2) Implement the National Ocean Policy
- 3) Enhance our ocean science enterprise

Recent events in the Gulf of Mexico clearly demonstrate the fragility of ocean and coastal ecosystems and how quickly lives and businesses can be upended when the services and benefits these resources provide are compromised. In fact, many of the problems encountered in the effort to address the Deepwater Horizon oil spill resulted from a lack of critical baseline information about the Gulf of Mexico marine ecosystem and its coastal communities and businesses. The situation demonstrated how our limited and often increasingly obsolete systems struggle to provide critical monitoring and scientific information to decision makers. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that management programs charged with utilizing this information are chronically underfunded. The FY 2012 budget provides an opportunity to address the crises facing our ocean and coastal ecosystems and communities.

Establish an Ocean Investment Fund

The establishment of a dedicated Ocean Investment Fund in the U.S. Treasury has been a priority of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and the two national ocean commissions that preceded it: the US Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission. Such a fund would allow for increased investment in improving our understanding and management of oceans, coasts, and the Great Lakes. It should be capitalized by a significant portion of rents derived from the use of publicly-owned ocean resources by the private sector in federal waters. Currently, virtually all federal revenues generated from activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) are derived from oil and gas activities. However, converging economic, technological, demographic, and environmental factors make our oceans an

increasingly attractive place for new and emerging commercial enterprises that will eventually generate federal revenues from the use of resources and space on the OCS. These might include a broad range of offshore energy activities such as wind, tidal, and wave power generation projects, as well as marine aquaculture, bioprospecting, and others. These existing and emerging OCS-generated revenues should be credited to the Ocean Investment Fund and used to support federal, regional, state and local ocean and coastal science and management priorities identified in the National Ocean Policy.

The concept of an Ocean Investment Fund was adopted by the House of Representatives in its recent energy bill (H.R. 3534), and also incorporated into legislation under consideration in the Senate (S.3641). The activities supported by the Fund would reinforce the principles and priorities of your STEM initiative while also contributing to economic recovery efforts by supporting balanced and predictable policies and priorities for coastal and offshore commercial development. Additionally, this funding would help us to improve our understanding of the relationship between oceans and climate change and our capacity to forecast changes that will have significant economic and environmental implications. *We urge you to include such a Fund in the FY 2012 budget request to clearly communicate your commitment to support robust implementation of the National Ocean Policy.*

Implement the National Ocean Policy

The National Ocean Policy established by Executive Order 13547 replaces the current sector-by-sector approach with a more coordinated, ecosystem-based approach to management. If funded and implemented appropriately, the National Ocean Policy will greatly improve coordination among federal agencies, their collaboration with states and regional initiatives, and lead to healthier oceans and coasts that provide the goods and services the American people want and need.

The Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force identify nine National Priority Objectives and call for the development of strategic action plans for each of these. We recently met with the co-chairs of the new National Ocean Council and are highly encouraged by their commitment to develop these plans and begin implementation. *We strongly urge sufficient funding in your FY 2012 budget request for the new National Ocean Council to develop and implement these strategic action plans; to better coordinate and support federal, state, tribal, local and regional management of the oceans, coasts and Great Lakes; and to support those areas where there is a compelling case for early investments, such as for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP).*

Successful partnerships between states and federal agencies and meaningful stakeholder and community engagement will be essential to successful implementation of the National Ocean Policy. For this reason, we strongly support the inclusion of \$26.8 million for CMSP and Regional Ocean Partnership Grants in your FY 2011 budget and encourage you to build on this for FY 2012. Likewise your budget for the FY 2011 doubled funding for ocean acidification research to \$12 million, provided funding for new Climate Assessment Services at \$10 million, increased funding for a Global Ocean Observing System by \$4.8 million, and included additional funding for the development of ocean sensors and the protection of important coastal lands. Each of these areas is directly tied to National Ocean Policy objectives and funding for them should be continued and enhanced in your FY 2012 budget.

Enhance the Ocean Science Enterprise

Your Administration has made a commitment to grounding policy in sound science, a principle we fully endorse. Nowhere is this need more apparent than in the management of oceans and coasts. Our understanding of complex ocean-related processes and their relationship with the atmosphere and land remains limited in large part because of inadequate funding to support basic and applied scientific research, monitoring, modeling and its translation into useable information for policy makers and business leaders. Advances in ocean science through greater federal investment, interagency coordination, and expanded public-private partnerships will be essential to successful implementation of the National Ocean Policy.

A first priority of the Administration should be reinvestment in the core infrastructure that is the foundation for scientific advancement. Ships, satellites, buoys, underwater sensors and vehicles, equipment, and computing and data management capacity are the backbones of the ocean science enterprise. Unfortunately, our current infrastructure is in a dangerous state of deterioration according to multiple reports from the National Academies and other authoritative sources. This situation is jeopardizing our nation's capacity respond to climate change, evaluate ocean energy and transportation priorities, strengthen fisheries science, and provide assistance to regional, state and local decision makers in the development of coastal and marine spatial plans.

Reinvestment in scientific infrastructure must be complemented by increasing programmatic support for ocean-related science programs, which also have been chronically underfunded. Immediate support is needed for basic ocean research in the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Navy; applied science and monitoring programs in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of the Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency. Additionally, robust ocean observing and forecasting systems, including the Integrated Ocean Observing System, inland water monitoring, and remote observing systems in NOAA and National Aeronautics and Space Administration are critically important. Likewise, sufficient funding for ocean exploration programs is necessary to provide NOAA and the nation the capability to discover and investigate new ocean areas and phenomena and conduct the basic research required to capitalize on discoveries.

Additionally, there are two specific areas that require increased scientific investment that are integral to successful implementation of the National Ocean Policy: better understanding the relationship between oceans and climate change and improving fisheries science to support resource management. Three fundamental climate-driven changes in the oceans are of paramount concern: Sea-level rise, increasing temperatures, and increasing acidity of ocean waters. These dramatic changes are affecting both the health of marine ecosystems and the human communities and economies that rely on them. For this reason, the important role that oceans play in regulating our planet's climate must move to the forefront of our national debate about how to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Specific recommendations for investment in FY 2012 include:

- Increase funding for basic and applied research into the underlying processes driving climate change, its impacts on the environment, economy, and society, and our capacity to evaluate mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- Establish and fund the proposed NOAA Climate Service to support collaborative public-private efforts to deliver credible and timely information to decision makers.

- Enhance efforts to understand the rapidly changing Arctic ecosystem, which is both a major driver and victim of climate change and harbors valuable natural resources. Russia, China, and Canada, among other nations, are making significant investments in Arctic research and exploration. The US is at risk of rapidly falling behind despite compelling economic, national security, and environmental reasons to fully engage.

Managing fisheries in a sustainable manner is also vital to the health of our coastal economies and ecosystems. Our marine fisheries provide jobs, food, and recreation that directly and indirectly benefit all Americans. In addition, the commercial and recreational fishing industries generate billions in sales and income and support millions of American jobs. However, the failure to adequately invest in fishery data collection and monitoring and decades of mismanagement are compromising the benefits our fisheries can provide and undermining efforts to restore fisheries that are depleted. Increased investment in FY 2012 for fisheries science should focus on improvements in the collection, accuracy, and timeliness of catch data that managers need to make informed decisions.

For these reasons, we strongly support increased funding in your FY 2012 budget request for core ocean science infrastructure and programs, and urge an emphasis on improving our capacity to understand the important connections between oceans and climate change and enhancing fisheries science to support better resource management and vibrant coastal communities. We recognize that the cost of modernizing our national ocean science enterprise must include substantial commitments from non-federal partners, but believe that immediate emphasis must be placed on restoring core science capabilities within the federal sector. This will secure the foundation upon which our partners in the states, academia, and the private sector can build complementary systems and capacity. The return on such an investment would be substantial as it would help guide decisions that directly impact our economy and our citizens.

Thank you again for making the health of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes a national priority and taking action to create the new National Ocean Policy. The Joint Initiative Leadership Council stands ready to assist you and the leaders in your Administration as you begin the important work of funding and implementing the National Ocean Policy.

Sincerely,



William Ruckelshaus
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative



Norman Mineta
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative

CC: Nancy Sutley, Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality
John P. Holdren, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy

Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State
Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense
Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior
Tom Vilsak, Secretary of Agriculture
Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Services
Gary Locke, Secretary of Commerce
Hilda L. Solis, Secretary of Labor
Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation
Steven Chu, Secretary of Energy
Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security
Eric H. Holder, Attorney General
Lisa P. Jackson, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency
Jeffrey Zients, Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget
Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
Charles F. Bolden Jr., Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
David C. Gompert, Acting Director of National Intelligence
Cora B. Marrett, Acting Director of the National Science Foundation
Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff