

The Honorable Daniel Inouye, Chairman
The Honorable Ted Stevens, Vice Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

August 7, 2007

Dear Chairman Inouye and Senator Stevens:

As Co-Chairs of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, we are writing in support of your proposed legislation to establish ocean and coastal trust funds. This legislation represents a very positive development by the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation that addresses recommendations made by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission and builds on the Committee's continuing effort to advance ocean-related legislation.

Progress toward implementation of our two Commissions' recommendations was aptly demonstrated by the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act last year and the numerous ocean-related bills currently under consideration by Congress. However, it remains abundantly clear that the potential for real progress at the local, state, regional, national, and international level is being compromised by a lack of funding. Increased fiscal support for ocean-related science, literacy, and education and coastal resource management, protection, and restoration are essential if we hope to make sustained progress toward addressing the challenges currently facing our nation's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

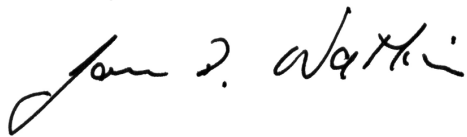
For this reason, we are very supportive of your efforts to establish a coastal and ocean assistance program for coastal states based on a fixed percentage of Outer Continental Shelf revenues and an ocean policy trust fund to support work being performed at all levels of government, including the academic and nongovernmental communities and private industry. These dedicated trust funds, generally consistent with the concepts put forward by our commissions and reasserted by the Joint Initiative, will be instrumental in stimulating interdisciplinary, interagency, and cross-sectoral collaboration that will lead us into the next generation of ocean policy.

The benefits of increased funding will include a better understanding of marine ecosystem processes and the impacts humans are having on them, knowledge that will be essential as we begin to make major policy decision regarding efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Furthermore, additional funding will allow for more comprehensive analysis of socioeconomic impacts of ocean-related policies and will improve our capacity to forecast future change, again

providing invaluable information as Congress and the states and local coastal communities wrestle with difficult economic and environmental policies decisions.

The Joint Initiative stands ready to work with you and your staff to refine the legislation to authorize the contribution of all revenue-generating activities occurring in federal waters to the trust funds and to ensure that these funds support high-priority activities and programs that enhance ocean science, management, and education and advance our understanding and conservation of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James D. Watkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leon E. Panetta". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission