

Co-Chairs

The Honorable
Norman Mineta
The Honorable
Christine Todd Whitman

US Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard

Members

December 12, 2017

Frances Beinecke

Donald Boesch, Ph.D.

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson, Subcommittee Chairman Sullivan and Subcommittee Ranking Member Peters,

Lillian Borrone

The Honorable
Norman Dicks

Thank you for scheduling a hearing on the National Ocean Policy, a topic of the utmost importance to a maritime nation that looks to its oceans for prosperity, transportation, protein, energy, protection, and inspiration.

Quenton Dokken, Ph.D.

Vice Admiral
Paul Gaffney, U.S. Navy
(Retired)

Robert Gagosian, Ph.D.

Sherri Goodman

Scott Gudes

Vice Admiral
Conrad Lautenbacher, Ph.D.
U.S. Navy (Retired)

Margaret Leinen, Ph.D.

Christopher Lischewski

The Honorable
Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.

Julie Packard

The Honorable
Leon Panetta

John Pappalardo

The Honorable
Pietro Parravano

Diane Regas

Randy Repass

Andrew Rosenberg, Ph.D.

The Honorable
William Ruckelshaus

Paul Sandifer, Ph.D.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (Joint Initiative) was established in 2005 to continue the legacy of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (USCOP) and the Pew Oceans Commission. The Joint Initiative's work embodies the vision that comprehensive, coordinated ocean policy is paramount to successful management of our oceans and coasts, both now and for future generations. As Co-Chairs of the Joint Initiative, we are writing to express our support for a broadly supported, bipartisan National Ocean Policy that coordinates and integrates ocean governance in the United States.

The USCOP's landmark report, *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century*, was groundbreaking in its vision for comprehensive ocean governance in the United States. Its guiding principles established a bipartisan path forward to support ocean and coastal economies, communities, and ecosystems. These principles, including stewardship, multiple use management, and science-based decision making, should guide Congress and the Administration as they consider updates or revisions to the current executive order establishing a National Ocean Policy. As part of any review, existing mechanisms that effectively advance these principles should be preserved. In addition, Congress could work to develop a national ocean policy that supplements the current executive order, garners support from all relevant sectors, and maximizes use of our oceans for the commonwealth.

In the meantime, many elements of the current National Ocean Policy are delivering results and are strongly supported by industry, states, regions, and other stakeholders. Through its implementation, stakeholders have gained broader access to ocean policy decision making, thereby fulfilling the USCOP principles of stewardship, participatory governance, and accountability. By supporting the creation of new data products that increase data and information availability to all stakeholders, the National Ocean Policy is ensuring the use of best-available science and information in public and private sector decision

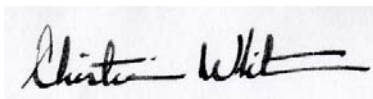
making. In supporting action on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, the National Ocean Policy promotes international responsibility. By integrating ocean governance, the National Ocean Policy helps to insure sustainability and stewardship of our oceans and coasts.

Perhaps most importantly, the National Ocean Policy improves coordination among government agencies and federal oceans programs. This coordination increases the efficiency of federal efforts to assist states and regions in achieving critical resource management goals for our oceans and coasts. It also increases efficiency in regulatory decision making. This dual efficiency not only exemplifies the vision of the USCOP, it also embodies the bipartisan need to ensure that federal spending goes as far as possible.

The current National Ocean Policy is far from perfect, and should be improved on. This underscores the need for a visionary, durable policy that can withstand changing administrations, and brings coherence and a sound strategy to ocean management. The United States lacks a strategy for sustainable development of its offshore areas. Conflicts abound among users, among agencies, and between different levels of government over the use of ocean resources and space. In some cases, such as energy development, U.S. policy oscillates between unmitigated development thrusts and the adoption of wholly conservationist approaches. This oscillation precludes a balanced, long term sustainable outcome and creates a policy vacuum that remains untenable. The prosperity of our nation's bustling ocean economy and the longevity of our marine resources depends on sound, integrated ocean governance.

We urge you to demonstrate leadership by ensuring that the principles of stewardship, multiple-use management, best-available science, adaptive management, coordination, participatory governance, and government efficiency are enshrined in U.S. ocean policy, as the USCOP intended. Regardless of policy mechanism, these principles must be maintained for coastal communities and economies to thrive. The current executive order establishing a National Ocean Policy is accomplishing many of these goals and, in our view, should be improved and not abandoned. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative remains dedicated to helping you and other U.S. leaders address ocean policy priorities through integrated ocean governance.

Sincerely,



Christine Todd Whitman
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative



Norman Y. Mineta
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative