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Joint Initiative Statement on Administration's Ocean Executive Order

June 28, 2018 (Washington, DC) – On June 19, 2018, President Trump signed an [Executive Order Regarding the Ocean Policy to Advance the Economic, Security, and Environmental Interests of the United States](#). It clarifies the Administration's ocean priorities, while repealing the 2010 National Ocean Policy and shifting focus away from ocean conservation, stewardship, and resilience. The bipartisan [Joint Ocean Commission Initiative](#) has carefully evaluated the Administration's priorities regarding ocean policy and appreciates this Executive Order's emphasis on sound science, collaboration, and growing our ocean economy. However, we insist that America can have both economic prosperity and a healthy ocean. In fact, they go hand in hand.

A strong and sustainable ocean economy, a "blue economy" for America, depends on healthy ecosystems, bountiful and sustainably managed fisheries, and resilient coastal communities. For this and other reasons, JOCI strongly urges Federal leaders to support ocean health, stewardship, and improved understanding of changing environmental conditions, including the oceans' key influence on weather and climate. While we are disappointed that these important elements are not apparent in this new policy, the Joint Initiative stands ready to work with all ocean stakeholders and leaders from both parties to ensure they remain a priority in practice. Moreover, the Joint Initiative agrees that sound, high quality, shared ocean information is an essential foundation for good policy making and underpins our national security.

Regional-scale coordination around national and regional ocean priorities has been a cornerstone recommendation, and a policy priority across Republican and Democratic administrations, since the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy first articulated them in 2004. It is encouraging that coordination with state, local, and tribal governments and ocean stakeholders will remain a Federal priority. This Federal mandate for collaboration should build on the important progress made by Regional Planning Bodies (RPBs) toward more coordinated, transparent, and participatory ocean governance. Although the Administration's new policy revokes a Federal requirement to participate in RPBs, we encourage strong Federal participation in Regional Ocean Partnerships across the country and call on Federal leadership to leverage progress already made in the regions. Building on existing regional ocean plans would be more efficient than abandoning them and would capitalize on years of positive relationship and consensus building that these regional planning processes have fostered. **We urge the Federal agencies to work closely with the Regional Ocean Partnerships to achieve regional priorities and to continue implementation of existing regional ocean plans, including updating them to account for new opportunities and challenges identified by the Administration and regional leaders.**

The Joint Initiative applauds the new policy's support for a strong American ocean science enterprise, such as by encouraging Federal participation in the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, and emphasis on public access to marine data and information. Data sharing platforms, including the widely popular Mid-Atlantic and Northeast ocean data portals and the Marine

Cadastre, have proven to be vital tools for disseminating ocean data for business and scientific uses. These and other data portals facilitate better private sector and government decision making and have reduced conflicts between ocean users. **Federal support for ocean data sharing platforms must continue.** In addition, America must continue to invest in science and monitoring to better understand rapidly changing ocean conditions in regions like the Arctic, where climate change poses an immediate national security risk. As essential partners in this effort, Federal ocean and coastal science programs must be a priority for funding if our nation's ocean science enterprise is to continue to provide momentum for a blue economy that delivers benefits to all Americans, including ocean industries and coastal communities.

In this era of rapid ocean change, strong and balanced Federal leadership is imperative to ensure that Americans continue to benefit from all that the ocean has to offer. **Over the next 90 days as Federal agencies review their regulations, guidance, and policies for consistency with this Executive Order, the Joint Initiative encourages Federal leadership to uphold the fundamental principles of sound ocean governance: ocean stewardship, data sharing and use of best-available science, multiple-use, ecosystem-based, and adaptive management, national security, coastal resiliency, coordination at regional, national, and international scales, participatory governance, and government efficiency.** The Administration's new policy references several, although not all, of these principles. We urge the Administration to capitalize on bi-partisan progress toward these principles over the past two decades by maintaining and strengthening the policies and programs with a proven track record of success, and we urge others in the multi-sectoral ocean community to support progress toward this goal. Doing so will enable this great maritime nation to continue to build a strong, sustainable blue economy for generations to come.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative brings together all sectors of the ocean community to catalyze action and monitor progress toward meaningful ocean policy reform. Meridian Institute serves as the secretariat for the Joint Initiative.