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June 4, 2004

Admiral James D. Watkins, Chair
United States Commission on Ocean Policy
1120 – 20th Street NW
Suite 200 North
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Preliminary Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (Commission). This long overdue review of national ocean policy provides key recommendations for the future of our oceans. Mr. Chairman, you and the members of the Commission are to be commended for your efforts and for your service to our country.

While the Commission has devoted several years to the production of this report, the hard work still lies ahead in implementing its recommendations. The people of Washington appreciate this study, but also share a sense of exasperation and concern that we are stuck in a cycle of “report and no action.” If we are to improve the condition of our oceans and the marine life within it, we must have clear goals, measured outcomes, and the political commitment to achieve success.

I consider the following points to be fundamental to the success of this endeavor:

1. Any organizational structure for ocean policy governance must promote decisions based on sound science, include regional participation in decision-making, and ensure adequate funding. We must also acknowledge the valuable role that tribes have in the governance, science and management of our ocean resources and include the tribes on a government-to-government basis.
2. It is not adequate for changes in fisheries management policies to merely stop the decline in marine species. These policies must contribute to reversing the trend of this decline. They must also enhance the overall sustainability of marine resources and evaluate the health of our oceans on an ecosystem scale.
3. Our nation must regain its position of global leadership on ocean issues. Here in the Pacific Northwest we know the value of working with our international neighbors. We share issues of mutual concern with Canada, and have successfully negotiated a U.S.-Canada salmon agreement. And because maritime trade is a major economic activity in Washington, we must be mindful of the international competition that exists within this industry.

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Five primary areas of interest have emerged from the high volume of comments I have received from state agencies, tribes, and stakeholders. I expand upon each of these areas in the enclosed document, but briefly these include:

Governance Structure – Establish national goals and standards, with benchmarks that measure success; begin with a National Ocean Council for immediate action, and pass a National Ocean Policy Act; I support establishing regional ocean councils, and improving the relationship between watershed planning and ecosystem-based management approaches.

Science in Decisions – Scientific understanding must form the foundation for ecosystem-based management and sustainable fisheries, and we must fully fund our scientific needs.

Build Sustainable Fisheries – Allow for regional flexibility on fisheries management, consistent with national goals for sustainable fisheries; fully fund regional science initiatives for ecosystem-based assessments; I also support the use of Marine Protected Areas.

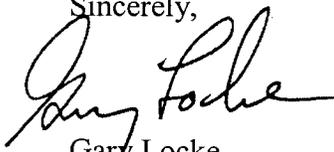
Protect Marine Ecosystems – The federal Clean Water Act must be updated and more funding for local implementation of the act is needed; the report does not address solutions for the problem of contaminated sediments; and the Coastal Zone Management Act must be reauthorized.

Education – I support the Commission's recommendations with respect to strengthening our promotion of ocean research, collaboration among various institutions, and the goal of lifelong ocean education.

I also am providing you with a representative sampling of the wide range of feedback I have gotten to date.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to respond. I look forward to the Commission's final report and to the full implementation of its recommendations.

Sincerely,



Gary Locke
Governor

Enclosures