

May 10, 2013

The Honorable Nancy Sutley
Co-Chair, National Ocean Council
Chairwoman, Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable John P. Holdren
Co-Chair, National Ocean Council
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street Room 5228
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Chairwoman Sutley and Director Holdren:

On behalf of Representatives from across the United States, we write to congratulate and thank you for releasing the Final Implementation Plan (“Plan”) of the National Ocean Policy (“NOP”). This demonstrates the Administration’s strong commitment to promoting the economic strength of our ocean economy, ensuring the health and resilience of our treasured ocean and coastal resources, and establishing a comprehensive, proactive approach anchored in sound science. We offer our strong support for the Plan and look forward to working collaboratively with you to advance full implementation of the NOP in a timely manner.

The NOP is focused squarely on growing the ocean economy. This is important not only for our districts, but for the country as a whole. In 2010, maritime economic activities such as shipping, marine construction, energy development, commercial fishing, recreational fishing and boating, aquaculture, and tourism contributed \$258 billion in GDP to the national economy and supported 2.8 million jobs.

Regional approaches and state/federal partnerships, such as voluntary regional planning bodies, continue to be the most effective and efficient way to address ocean management challenges and are crucial to providing regulatory certainty for all sectors of our ocean economy. The Plan bolsters the efforts of regional planning bodies and regional ocean partnerships that are already underway, such as the Northeast Regional Ocean Council and the West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health. The success of these partnerships, which began prior to the implementation of the Plan, is a testament to the efficacy of the common-sense collaborations encouraged under the NOP. We applaud the Administration for their continued support of regional planning bodies.

The Plan also prioritizes a number of critical conservation and restoration actions that are important to our constituents. First, it rightly highlights the significant economic value of conservation and restoration. Restoration activities provide direct economic opportunities, and healthy natural systems support jobs in industries such as tourism, recreation, and commercial fishing. We support the various Agency efforts to coordinate protection, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands, coral reefs, and other high-priority ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes habitats. The federal government already has the existing authority both to implement the priority actions listed in the technical appendix of the Final Implementation Plan and to work collaboratively with State and Tribal governments to establish marine plans.

The Plan also promotes federal efforts to employ an ecosystem based approach to resource management. This science-based, collaborative, and efficient approach will improve our ability to plan smartly to grow our ocean economy, promote ocean health, and ensure widespread access to the benefits our ocean resources have to offer.

Finally, the Plan strongly promotes the importance of coastal and ocean data collection systems. The oceanographic, biological, and human use data that these systems collect constitute a crucial underpinning of all marine management efforts, from establishing shipping lanes to restoring coastal habitat. Increased data availability and quality also lead to greater economic efficiencies by informing the ecological and economic models and decision support tools that guide marine management. For example, the availability of adequate, high-quality data for marine planning enables managers to minimize conflict between ocean uses and identify the most economically efficient configurations of ocean uses.

The ocean is our largest public trust and we must manage and steward this important resource with the highest degree of public and stakeholder engagement. We commend the Administration's dedication to public outreach and engagement in the development of the Plan. Indeed, the Plan represents a tremendous effort to engage all the relevant stakeholders. Therefore, we would like to highlight and praise the extensive public process that the National Ocean Council has spear-headed.

The Plan offers an effective roadmap to build the ocean economy and protect our treasured ocean resources. We look forward to working closely with you to fully implement the National Ocean Policy.

Sincerely

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