

## Participating Organizations

Alliance for a Living Ocean  
 American Littoral Society  
 Arthur Kill Coalition  
 Asbury Park Fishing Club  
 Bayberry Garden Club  
 Bayshore Regional Watershed Council  
 Belford Seafood Co-op  
 Belmar Fishing Club  
 Beneath The Sea  
 Bergen Save the Watershed Action Network  
 Berkeley Shores Homeowners Civic Association  
 Cape May Environmental Commission  
 Central Jersey Anglers  
 Citizens Conservation Council of Ocean County  
 Clean Air Campaign, NY  
 Coalition Against Toxics  
 Coalition for Peace & Justice/Urging Salem  
 Coast Allies  
 Coastal Jersey Parrot Head Club  
 Communication Workers of America, Local 1034  
 Concerned Businesses of COA  
 Concerned Citizens of Bensonhurst  
 Concerned Citizens of COA  
 Concerned Citizens of Montauk  
 Concerned Students and Educators of COA  
 Eastern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce  
 Fisher's Island Conservancy  
 Fishermen's Conservation Association, NJ Chapter  
 Fishermen's Conservation Association, NY Chapter  
 Fishermen's Dock Cooperative, Pt. Pleasant  
 Friends of Island Beach State Park  
 Friends of Liberty State Park, NJ  
 Friends of the Boardwalk, NY  
 Garden Club of Englewood  
 Garden Club of Fair Haven  
 Garden Club of Long Beach Island  
 Garden Club of RFD Middletown  
 Garden Club of Morristown  
 Garden Club of Navesink  
 Garden Club of New Jersey  
 Garden Club of New Vernon  
 Garden Club of Oceanport  
 Garden Club of Princeton  
 Garden Club of Rumson  
 Garden Club of Short Hills  
 Garden Club of Shrewsbury  
 Garden Club of Spring Lake  
 Garden Club of Washington Valley  
 Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association  
 Green Party of Monmouth County  
 Green Party of New Jersey  
 Highlands Business Partnership  
 Holly Club of Sea Girt  
 Hudson River Fishermen's Association  
 Jersey Shore Captains Association  
 Jersey Shore Parrot Head Club  
 Jersey Shore Running Club  
 Junior League of Monmouth County  
 Keyport Environmental Commission  
 Kiwanis Club of Manasquan  
 Kiwanis Club of Shadow Lake Village  
 Leonardo Party & Pleasure Boat Association  
 Leonardo Tax Payers Association  
 Main Street Wildwood  
 Mantoloking Environmental Commission  
 Marine Trades Association of NJ  
 Monmouth Conservation Foundation  
 Monmouth County Association of Realtors  
 Monmouth County Audubon Society  
 Monmouth Friends of Clearwater  
 National Coalition for Marine Conservation  
 Natural Resources Protection Association, NY  
 NJ Beach Bagger Association  
 NJ Commercial Fishermen's Association  
 NJ Environmental Federation  
 NJ Environmental Lobby  
 NJ Main Ship Owners Group  
 NJ Marine Education Association  
 NJ PIRG Citizen Lobby  
 Nottingham Hunting & Fishing Club, NJ  
 NYC Sea Gypsies  
 NY State Marine Education Association  
 NY/NJ Baykeeper  
 Ocean Wreck Divers, NJ  
 PaddleOut.org  
 Picatinny Salwater Sportsmen Club  
 Raritan Riverkeeper  
 Religious Water  
 Riverside Drive Association  
 Rotary Club of Long Branch  
 Rotary District #7510—Interact  
 Saltwater Anglers of Bergen County  
 Sandy Hook Bay Anglers  
 Save Barnegat Bay  
 Save the Bay, NJ  
 SEAS Monmouth  
 Seaweeders Garden Club  
 Shark Research Institute  
 Shark River Cleanup Coalition  
 Shark River Surf Anglers  
 Shore Adventure Club  
 Sierra Club, NJ Shore Chapter  
 Sisters of Charity, Maris Stella  
 Sons of Ireland of Monmouth County  
 Soroptimist Club of Cape May County  
 South Jersey Dive Club  
 South Monmouth Board of Realtors  
 Staten Island Tuna Club  
 Stratmene Fishing & Environmental Club  
 Surfers' Environmental Alliance  
 Surfrider Foundation, Jersey Shore Chapter  
 TACK I, MA  
 Terra Nova Garden Club  
 Three Harbors Garden Club  
 Unitarian Universalist Congregation/Monmouth Cnty.  
 United Boatmen of NY/NJ  
 Village Garden Club  
 Volunteer Friends of Boaters, NJ  
 WATERSPIRIT  
 Women's Club of Brick Township  
 Women's Club of Keyport  
 Women's Club of Long Branch  
 Women's Club of Merchantville  
 Women's Club of Spring Lake  
 Women Gardeners of Ridgewood  
 Zen Society



# Clean Ocean Action

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Ocean Advocacy  
 Since 1984

**August 14, 2009**

**Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force**  
 c/o Ms. Nancy Sutley, Chairwoman  
 White House Council on Environmental Quality  
 722 Jackson Place  
 Washington, DC 20503

## **Re: National Policy for the Oceans, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes**

Dear Chairwoman Sutley and members of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force:

Clean Ocean Action (COA) is a regional, broad-based coalition of 125 conservation, environmental, fishing, boating, diving, student, surfing, women's, business, service, and community groups with a mission to improve the degraded water quality of the marine waters of the New Jersey/New York coast. We have been actively engaged in the national Outer Continental Shelf (herein the "OCS") energy development discussions and have provided extensive comments on several energy projects proposed off the New Jersey coastline, including three commercial-scale wind facilities, three liquefied natural gas facilities and oil/gas exploration and development. COA was also instrumental in developing the federal Clean Ocean Zone legislation, set to be introduced in the U.S. Congress by our New Jersey legislators, which includes important marine spatial planning principles.

In his June 12, 2009 Memorandum on National Policy for the Oceans, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes (herein the "Ocean Policy Memo"), President Obama made clear his expectations of a definitive national policy whose core value is to "*ensure(s) the protection, maintenance, and restoration of the health of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources.*"<sup>1</sup> He also called for "*a comprehensive, ecosystem-based framework*"<sup>2</sup> to provide the underpinnings of an effective and protective national policy that is based on objective, scientifically valid information. The President campaigned on the promise to "*restore the basic principle that government decisions should be based on the best-available, scientifically-valid evidence*"<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> President Barrack Obama to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, Memorandum regarding National Policy for the Oceans, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes, June 12, 2009, The White House Office of the Press Secretary.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> ScienceDebate2008, (August 30, 2008) "Presidential Answers to the top 14 Science Questions facing America", last visited August 14, 2009, from <http://www.sciencedebate2008.com/www/index.php?id=40>

this initiative is further proof of his ongoing commitment to science as a driver of policy. COA shares President Obama's vision to ensure the continued protection of the ocean today and for future generations and we look forward to contributing to his efforts to develop of a long-overdue national policy. Below please find our recommendations for ensuring an effective and protective national policy based on best-available, scientifically-valid information, including important actions that are required to support this policy, which includes ecosystem-based management, precautionary principle, adaptive management, cumulative impacts and public participation. We will also be submitting additional comments at a later date on the issue of marine spatial planning and renewable energy development, as outlined in the President's Ocean Policy Memo.

## NATIONAL POLICY FOR OUR OCEANS, OUR COASTS, AND GREAT LAKES

The national policy must be to protect, maintain, and restore healthy, productive and resilient oceans and coastal ecosystems. This can only be achieved through the implementation of each of the following actions.

### **Employing a comprehensive Ecosystem-Based Management Approach**

In 2005, the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea (herein "COMPASS") called for a new management strategy for our marine resources that utilizes a comprehensive, integrated ecosystem approach, in contrast to the current practice of sector-by-sector management by multiple agencies with different and often conflicting mandates. COMPASS developed the following consensus definition of Ecosystem-based Management that was signed by over 220 scientist and policy experts, including Dr. Jane Lubchenco, President Obama's current NOAA Administrator.

*"Ecosystem-based management is an integrated approach to management that considers the entire ecosystem, including humans. The goal of ecosystem-based management is to maintain an ecosystem in a healthy, productive and resilient condition so that it can provide the services humans want and need. Ecosystem-based management differs from current approaches that usually focus on a single species, sector, activity or concern; it considers the cumulative impacts of different sectors. Specifically, ecosystem-based management:*

- *emphasizes the protection of ecosystem structure, functioning, and key processes;*
- *is place-based in focusing on a specific ecosystem and the range of activities affecting it;*
- *explicitly accounts for the interconnectedness within systems, recognizing the importance of interactions between many target species or key services and other non-target species;*
- *acknowledges interconnectedness among systems, such as between air, land and sea; and*
- *integrates ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives, recognizing their strong interdependences.<sup>4</sup>"*

When read in its entirety, the six page COMPASS statement clearly states that the primary goal must be to protect, maintain, and restore healthy, productive and resilient ecosystems. This priority is further articulated in the "Key Elements of Ecosystem-Based Management" section of the document, which was taken from the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission. The very first element listed is: "*Make protecting and restoring marine ecosystems*

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<sup>4</sup> Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea, "Scientific Consensus Statement on Marine Ecosystem-Based Management" March 21, 2005 [http://compassonline.org/pdf\\_files/EBM\\_Consensus\\_Statement\\_v12.pdf](http://compassonline.org/pdf_files/EBM_Consensus_Statement_v12.pdf)

*and all their services the primary focus, even above short-term economic or social goals for single services. Only intact, healthy ecosystems can provide the complete range of benefits that humans want and need over long periods of time.*<sup>5</sup>” Any ocean policy that reverses this relationship and emphasizes human wants and needs as the catalyst for ecosystem protection, will fail in both endeavors. This seemingly subtle, yet fundamental distinction is critical to developing an effective national policy that can achieve both a healthy ecosystem and by consequence, meet human’s wants and needs.

Therefore, in order to more clearly and unequivocally describe the true intention of this coalition of scientists and policy makers, COA recommends the national policy include the comprehensive COMPASS definition and description of ecosystem-based management with the following clarification to the definition,: “*The goal of ecosystem-based management is to maintain an ecosystem in a healthy, productive and resilient condition which will provide the services humans want and need.*”

### **Utilizing the Precautionary Principle**

As defined at the 1998 Wingspread Conference, the Precautionary Principle is “*When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.*”<sup>6</sup>

Applying the Precautionary Principle to our national oceans and coastal policy means requiring evidence that an action will not cause undue harm to ecosystem functioning before allowing that action to proceed. Utilization of a precautionary approach would apply judicious and responsible management practices, based on best available science<sup>7</sup> and would put the burden on the proposed action to prove no undue harm. Using this same line of reasoning, the U.S.

Commission on Ocean Policy clearly stated “*where threats of serious or irreversible damage exist, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a justification for postponing action to prevent environmental degradation.*”<sup>8</sup>

### **Adopting an Adaptive Management Strategy**

The use of an adaptive management strategy that is guided by the precautionary principle is critical to the success of ocean and coastal resource management because it accounts for the inherent uncertainties of the natural world, socioeconomic developments, and the outcomes of management actions.<sup>9</sup> COA supports a definition of adaptive management that allows regulators to take action in the face of uncertainty, enhances scientific knowledge to reduce uncertainties, and responds to unanticipated events.<sup>10,11</sup> We recommend the Interagency National Ocean

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Wingspread Conference, Racine, Wisconsin, 23-25 January 1998

<sup>7</sup> D.F. Boesch (2006) Scientific requirements for ecosystem-based management in the restoration of Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Louisiana. Ecological Engineering. 26: 6-26.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (2004) An Ocean Blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Final Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, Washington, D.C.

<sup>9</sup> D.F. Boesch (2006) Scientific requirements for ecosystem-based management in the restoration of Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Louisiana. Ecological Engineering. 26: 6-26.

<sup>10</sup> National Research Council (2004) Adaptive Management for Water Resources Project Planning. National Academies Press, Washington, D.C. <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10972.html>

<sup>11</sup> D.F. Boesch (2006) Scientific requirements for ecosystem-based management in the restoration of Chesapeake Bay and Coastal Louisiana. Ecological Engineering. 26: 6-26.

Policy Taskforce (herein the “INOP”) refer to the structured approach to adaptive management developed by the National Research Council which includes the following set of requirements: “*Management objectives that are regularly revisited and accordingly revised, a model(s) of the system being managed, a range of management options, monitoring and evaluating outcomes of management actions, mechanisms for incorporating learning into future decisions, and a collaborative structure for stakeholder participation and learning.*”<sup>12</sup>

### **Accounting and Protecting for Cumulative Impacts**

The current sector-based management system contributes to an often deficient and ineffective analysis of a proposed project’s cumulative impacts. For example, a study of 89 Environmental Assessments (EAs) prepared by 13 different federal agencies, found that only 35 of the EAs (39%) mentioned cumulative impacts anywhere in the document and only one-half of the 35 provided any evidence or rationale for reaching a conclusion of no significant cumulative impacts.<sup>13</sup> Adopting an ecosystem-based approach to management of our marine and Great Lakes waters will improve cumulative impact assessment by requiring permitting agencies to recognize and consider the dynamic interconnectedness within and between ecosystems and consequently evaluate the cumulative effects of different proposed activities on the diversity and interactions of species. An effective and protective national policy must ensure the development and implementation of policies, management plans, regulations, and enforcement procedures that account for cumulative impacts. COA will provide additional comments on the critical role that cumulative impact assessment must play in the Marine Spatial Planning process when we submit formal comments on this issue at a later date..

### **Implementing Robust, Meaningful Public Participation as the Cornerstone of Good Governance Structure**

In general, Clean Ocean Action supports the recommendations offered by the Coastal States Organization (herein the “CSO”) entitled “*Recommendation # 5: Adopt an Ocean Governance Framework that Builds on Existing State, Regional, and Federal Partnerships*”.<sup>14</sup> Our support for this recommendation comes with some important distinctions.

First, CSO’s recommendation includes a bullet that “*Support[s] a mechanism such as the Ocean Trust Fund to develop, fund and implement regional plans.*” As described in a separate recommendation (# 3) the CSO’s proposed Ocean Trust Fund would include revenue from offshore drilling, as well as other activities that occur in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes ecosystems. Please refer to the section below entitled “Ocean Trust Fund” for Clean Ocean Action’s recommendations on this issue.

Second, efforts to develop and implement an effective national policy will only be successful through meaningful involvement of the interested public. A concept that is also endorsed by the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> L. McCold and J. Holman (1995) “Cumulative impacts in environmental assessments: How well are they considered?” Environmental Professional 17(1): 2-8

<sup>14</sup> Kristen M. Fletcher, Executive Director, Coastal States Organization “Priorities for a National Policy for the Oceans, Coasts & Great Lakes”. Submitted to the White House Council on Environmental Quality, July 30, 2009. pp. 5-6. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/formsubmissions/54/CSO\\_Recommendations\\_for\\_National\\_Policy\\_7-30-09.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/formsubmissions/54/CSO_Recommendations_for_National_Policy_7-30-09.pdf)

CSO in Recommendation # 5 on Governance Framework: “*Encourage and facilitate significant opportunities for public input and involvement in regional ocean governance initiatives.*”<sup>15</sup> Even the most well-planned and efficient governance structure will fail if it does not include a clear requirement for meaningful public participation at all levels of government and at each stage of development. To that end, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (herein the “CEQ”) must take immediate steps to improve current public outreach efforts in order to actively engage and inform the interested public on the process and opportunities for participation. For example, the CEQ webpage on the INOP Taskforce does not provide any contact information, public comment deadlines, information on upcoming public hearing, or even a list of INOP Taskforce members. This dearth of information prevents the interested public from providing their valuable input to the INOP Taskforce, sets a poor precedence for future public participation, and contradicts the clear requirement for public participation described in the President’s Ocean Policy Memo. Considering the abbreviated time frame set forth in the Ocean Policy Memo, improving public outreach and participation must be addressed quickly. The development and implementation of a national ocean policy, an ecosystem-based management approach and marine spatial planning, all must include an explicit requirement for robust and ongoing public participation in the form of workgroups and/or taskforces active at each level of governance (federal, regional and state). The inclusion of the interested public at all stages of the process leads to stronger, more resilient plans by providing knowledge about issues/problems present at all scales (national, regional and local) and allows for the development of common solutions that lead to public support and ownership of policies, programs and activities.

### **Recognizing the Public Trust Doctrine for the EEZ**

COA calls for official recognition of the Public Trust Doctrine for the Exclusive Economic Zone.

### **Establishing an Ocean Trust Fund**

Clean Ocean Action is deeply concerned about the inherent conflict of interest that will be created if funding the Ocean Trust Fund includes direct revenue produced by expanding or establishing new ecologically-harmful industrial use such as oil and gas drilling. Although several others have proposed this type of funding mechanism, after careful consideration, COA believes such an approach threatens the very foundation of an effective and protective national ocean policy by potentially encouraging activities that do not protect, maintain, and restore healthy, productive and resilient ocean and coastal ecosystems.

We propose an alternative funding method for the Ocean Trust Fund that would include a permanent and dedicated annual federal allocation from general revenues. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy reported that our oceans, coastal watersheds and the Great Lakes combine to contribute over 4.5 trillion dollars to the annual total National Gross Domestic Product (herein the “GDP”) (as estimated in 2000)<sup>16</sup>. This equates to an impressive 50% of the total GDP. The Western Governor’s Association determined the Ocean Trust Fund would require “*a dedicated source of revenues eventually reaching \$4 billion annually to support the management, protection, and understanding of the natural and economic resources along our nation’s coasts,*

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. (2004) *An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century*, Final Report., Washington, DC

*oceans, Great Lakes, and islands.*"<sup>17</sup> Therefore, to fully fund the Ocean Trust Fund would only require an allocation of less than 0.1% of the total revenue generated by these valuable ecosystems! This direct allocation is completely justifiable given the substantial revenues they generate, not to mention a prudent investment that is necessary to sustain current returns.

### **Implementing Marine Spatial Planning**

COA supports the development and implementation of Marine Spatial Planning, as long as it includes a requirement for robust and meaningful public input and participation. This issue, as prescribed by the Ocean Policy Memo will be addressed in the near future however we wanted to highlight the importance of this issue at this time. We will therefore provide more expansive comments and recommendations on this issue to the CEQ and the IOCP Taskforce at a later date.

In conclusion, Clean Ocean Action looks forward to continued participation in this ongoing process of developing an effective and protective National Policy for the Oceans, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes that ensure the maintenance and restoration of these important ecosystems. We also request representation on any formal or informal public workgroups or taskforces being utilized by the CEQ or INOP taskforce to achieve the goals set forth in the President's Ocean Policy Memo.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director

Jennifer Samson, Ph.D.  
Principal Scientist

Heather Saffert, Ph.D.  
Staff Scientist

David Byer, Esq.  
Water Policy Attorney

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<sup>17</sup> Western Governor's Association "Policy Resolution 09-10" submitted by Shanna Brown, Deputy Director of Washington D.C. Office to the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

<http://www.westgov.org/wga/policy/09/oceans.pdf>