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Joint Initiative Applauds Presidential Task Force Recommendations for National Ocean Policy

Initial recommendations released today would protect our nation's vital ocean, coastal and Great Lake resources and the industries that depend on them

Statement from the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative:

September 17, 2009 (Washington, D.C.) – Today, our nation has come one step closer to establishing a national ocean policy that will protect our oceans and strengthen the economic viability of the industries that depend on them. Created by President Obama in June, the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force today released an interim report outlining recommendations that significantly advance the effort to develop a strong, cohesive and effective system to manage our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes.

Currently, our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes are governed by more than 140 laws and 20 different federal agencies, often resulting in confusing, overlapping or even conflicting management responsibilities. With ocean industries—including fishing, shipping, and coastal tourism and recreation—generating about \$138 billion for the U.S. each year, it is essential that we use effective oversight that will help minimize negative impacts on these vital resources and maximize our return.

A national ocean policy will help us to plan proactively to manage issues ranging from resource development to climate change. With 14 of the 20 largest U.S. cities located less than 10 meters above sea level and a coastal population that has doubled over the past 50 years, changing weather patterns and rising sea levels can seriously impact coastal homes, businesses and infrastructure. In addition to planning for these potentially significant economic impacts, a national plan can also support cost-effective and environmentally sound management in areas that present new opportunities like the resource-rich Arctic or international waters on the high seas.

The recommendations outlined today go a long way toward ensuring effective preparation and management by proposing a new government-wide framework that will focus

immediate attention and resources on priority issues. Put into practice, this policy will streamline oversight and help eliminate conflicting or overlapping mandates and responsibilities. These steps are essential to ensuring the long-term health of coastal and marine ecosystems and ocean-dependent industries — from commercial fishing to coastal tourism — that are threatened by impacts associated with climate change, such as ocean acidification and sea level rise.

As a collaborative effort of two major commissions dedicated to supporting ocean policy reform, the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is grateful for President Obama and his Administration's leadership and commitment to addressing this important issue. We look forward to working with the task force as it continues to develop a framework for planning and managing new and emerging activities in coastal and marine waters. For more information on the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and our work, please visit www.jointoceancommission.org or call Laura Cantral at 202-354-6444.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission. The primary goal of the Joint Initiative is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform.