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Joint Initiative Recognizes the National Ocean Policy 5th Anniversary

July 20, 2015 (Washington, D.C.)— The Joint Initiative applauds the remarkable progress our nation has made in coordinating efforts among all sectors to protect and restore our oceans and coasts. The National Ocean Policy directs federal agencies with responsibility for oceans to manage marine spaces and resources in a coordinated manner that supports state priorities and efforts. Since President Obama’s executive order was issued in 2010, diverse stakeholders from coastal regions, states, and private industries have come together to ensure that government agencies make better management decisions about ocean resources that secure the long-term health and prosperity of their economies and societies.

The National Ocean Policy has catalyzed efforts throughout the nation that have engaged federal agencies, scientists and researchers, energy developers, commercial and recreational fisherman, port operators and many more in supporting new coastal industries, maintaining traditional marine sectors, and securing the environmental health of the oceans. The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions are well on their way to establishing the nation’s first comprehensive regional ocean plans. Although critics of the National Ocean Policy fear that these collaborative processes add costs or new layers of bureaucracy, the exact opposite has proven to be true for the states and regions involved to date.

In 2007, the state of Rhode Island initiated a stakeholder engagement process to gather input on potential sites they had identified for offshore wind energy production. They engaged various sectors and members of the public to give them access to the latest information and to address their issues and concerns. By soliciting input from a diverse group of stakeholders, the state was able to learn that their initially proposed sites were not environmentally or economically viable, due to their proximity to the shore and the high volume of commercial and recreational activity occurring within those areas. Public engagement and coordinated planning ultimately plaid off; Rhode Island is now slated to complete the United States’ first offshore wind energy project in 2017.

The National Ocean Policy demonstrates that our nation recognizes the importance of healthy and productive oceans and coasts to the economic, environmental, and social health of our nation and our planet. Upon its establishment, the National Ocean Policy took a big step toward addressing the crises our ocean and coastal ecosystems are facing and has significantly improved the way decision makers at every level manage these valuable resources.

We hope our nation continues to regard our oceans and coasts as top priorities and continues to show leadership in their protection and restoration. The Joint Initiative stands ready to continue to assist national, regional, and state leaders in enhancing effective coordination under a strong national ocean policy to ensure are oceans and coasts are healthy, resilient, and capable of providing the goods and services the American people need well into the future.

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.