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Joint Initiative Congratulates the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Bodies

December 7, 2016 (Washington, D.C.) — The Joint Initiative congratulates the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Bodies on the finalization of their regional ocean plans. Today, the National Ocean Council (NOC) officially certified the regions' plans, marking the beginning of their implementation. Both regional plans demonstrate the remarkable progress our nation has made in coordinating efforts among all sectors to better manage, protect, and restore our oceans and coasts. The Joint Initiative has long advocated for collaborative regional approaches to ocean management.

"For decades, our oceans and coasts have been managed under insufficiently coordinated sector-based approaches," said Norm Mineta, Co-Chair of the Joint Initiative and former Secretary of Commerce and Transportation. "The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regional ocean plans provide a compelling collaborative and integrated alternative that addresses each region's ocean priorities, and can be built upon to improve the management of their ocean and coastal resources." The Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy strongly recommended a regional approach to ocean and coastal management. Both Commissions believed that regional collaboration is the best approach to improving ocean governance and the management of vital marine resources.

The Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions have led the way in developing and implementing the nation's first regional ocean plans through collaboration across federal, state, tribal, and regional fishery management council jurisdictions and with the benefit of diverse stakeholder engagement and input. These regional planning processes engaged governmental entities, scientists and researchers, energy developers, fishermen, recreational users, port operators, and many more in supporting new coastal industries, maintaining traditional marine sectors, and securing the environmental health of the oceans and the communities that depend on them. These plans outline a series of best practices and specific collaborative actions that federal agencies, states, tribes, and regional fishery management councils are implementing together to improve ocean management. The plans are the result of negotiations among diverse stakeholders to agree on a path forward to maximize the benefits of commonly-held ocean resources. When implemented, these plans can promote ocean health and functionality, minimize conflict, improve effectiveness, and support economic growth.

"The regional planning process provided an opportunity for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions to develop a shared vision for the future of their ocean and coasts," said Christine Todd Whitman, Co-Chair of the Joint Initiative and former Governor of New Jersey. "It is important to remember that other parts of the country are just beginning this journey. These regions will also need support from federal and state leaders to ensure we maintain vibrant ocean economies and healthy marine ecosystems. The wellbeing of our oceans and coasts must remain a top priority."

The Joint Initiative stands ready to continue to assist national, regional, and state leaders in enhancing effective coordination to ensure our 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. Its primary goal is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform.