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Joint Initiative Releases Ocean Action Agenda

March 7, 2017 (Washington, DC) —Today, the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (Joint Initiative), a bipartisan group of senior ocean leaders from industry, academia, and civil society, as well as former senior government officials, calls on the Trump Administration and Congress to take action to protect our oceans and coasts and grow the ocean economy. The interactive digital report, *Ocean Action Agenda: Supporting Regional Ocean Economies and Ecosystems* (oceanactionagenda.org), outlines a substantial agenda for ensuring the future health and productivity of our oceans.

To create these recommendations, the Joint Initiative convened nearly 250 nonprofit, industry, and military leaders, as well as representatives from federal, state, local, and tribal entities, to discuss regional priorities, challenges, and needs at a series of roundtables on the East, West, and Gulf Coasts and in the U.S. Arctic. “While each regional experience is unique, many of the underlying challenges are the same. Extreme weather events like Superstorm Sandy, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and the loss of critical habitat are issues of concern across the country and underscore the urgent need for action by our nation’s leaders,” said Christine Todd Whitman, Co-Chair of the Joint Initiative and former Governor of New Jersey. “This commitment is particularly urgent in light of the reported budget proposals indicating extreme cuts to essential ocean and coastal programs.” To address these challenges, the Joint Initiative’s report contains actions that the Trump Administration and Congress can take to improve the management of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. In addition to the recommendations, the *Ocean Action Agenda* includes dozens of stories from across the country that highlight the oceans importance to the lives of all Americans.

America’s oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes are the lifeblood of communities from the Arctic to the Gulf of Mexico. “The oceans and coasts sustain a range of economic activities, including traditional economic activities such as fishing and shipping, as well as a burgeoning blue technology sector,” said Norman Y. Mineta, Co-Chair of the Joint Initiative and former Secretary of Commerce and Transportation. “While opportunities to use America’s oceans are increasing, we also face new and serious challenges that threaten our national security, infrastructure, economy, and way of life.” Rising levels of pollution, more frequent toxic algal blooms, more intense and frequent storms, and ocean acidification undermine the productivity of the coastal waters that everyday Americans rely upon for jobs, food, health, and recreation.

If implemented, the recommendations in the Ocean Action Agenda will strengthen ocean-dependent economies, protect coastal communities, and provide opportunities for growth in our oceans and Great Lakes. The Joint Initiative stands ready to assist America’s leaders to ensure the health, productivity, and resilience of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative brings together all sectors of the ocean community to catalyze action and monitor progress toward meaningful ocean policy reform.