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Joint Initiative Opposes Cuts to Critical Ocean Programs

March 16, 2017 (Washington, DC) — Today the Trump Administration released its budget blueprint for Fiscal Year 2018. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (Joint Initiative) is deeply disappointed by the proposed cuts to critical ocean and coastal programs at NOAA, EPA, NASA, and within the Department of the Interior. These programs are essential to the health and economic productivity of America's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

In stark contrast to the President's budget blueprint, the Joint Initiative's new report, the [Ocean Action Agenda: Supporting Regional Ocean Economies and Ecosystems](#), includes specific actions that the Trump Administration and the Congress must take to effectively manage America's ocean and coastal resources. It calls for targeted investments and strategic support of programs that benefit coastal communities, which rely on the ocean for their livelihoods but are simultaneously facing new and increasing threats. This digital report is based on input from Joint Initiative-led roundtable meetings of hundreds of industry, military, nonprofit, and tribal leaders, as well as local, state, and federal government officials representing America's coasts. Leaders at these meetings emphasized the dramatic changes occurring along their coasts and the need for robust and coordinated federal involvement to support regional priorities.

The budget blueprint significantly reduces, and in some case wholly eliminates, funding for critical programs across federal agencies that support state and local initiatives essential to many coastal communities. These agencies have mandates to protect and serve communities and manage ocean resources, activities that are grossly undermined by this budget proposal. "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 investment," said Christine Todd Whitman, Co-Chair of the Joint Initiative and former Governor of New Jersey and EPA Administrator. "This is precisely the wrong time to reduce federal support to states and coastal communities and to make cuts that undermine critical environmental protections."

The proposed elimination of over \$250 million in NOAA grants and programs will substantially impact coastal communities and ocean stakeholders. Programs supporting coastal and marine management, research, and education provide services that fuel coastal economies and protect fragile marine environments. Wholesale eliminations and stark reductions in these programs will impact every coastal state's ability to provide valuable services to coastal communities and ensure they remain engines of economic growth in a rapidly changing world. In addition, cuts to scientific research and infrastructure would hinder programs critical to America's economy, health, and national security. "These cuts are ill-timed to meet the growing demand for NOAA's services and the needs of the American people," said Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher, U.S. Navy (Retired), member of the Joint Initiative Leadership Council and NOAA Administrator under President George W. Bush. "While it is admirable that the President wants to provide our armed forces with

additional resources, he must recognize that NOAA and other federal agencies are critical partners that also need support.”

Strong federal programs are essential to proper management of ocean resources and the growth of our ocean economy. America’s oceans and Great Lakes are the lifeblood of communities from the Arctic to the Gulf of Mexico. They provide jobs, food, health, and recreation for tens of millions of Americans. Unfortunately, the current budget blueprint fails to improve the management of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. The Joint Initiative stands ready to assist the Administration and Congressional leaders as they fulfill their responsibility to strengthen our ocean-dependent economy, ensure responsible stewardship of ocean resources, protect vulnerable coastal communities, and provide opportunities for growth.

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