

Co-Chairs

The Honorable
Norman Mineta
The Honorable
Christine Todd Whitman

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

Members

Frances Beinecke
Donald Boesch, Ph.D.
The Honorable
Norman Dicks
Quenton Dokken, Ph.D.

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

April 20th, 2020

Robert Gagosian, Ph.D.
Sherri Goodman
Scott Gudes

Dear Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We greatly appreciate your leadership to address the public health crisis gripping the nation and the world. As you evaluate strategies to revive and stabilize the economy in these unprecedented times, we want to highlight the central role of oceans and coasts in helping you achieve these ends.

Vice Admiral
Conrad Lautenbacher,
Ph.D. U.S. Navy (Retired)
Margaret Leinen, Ph.D.

Our oceans and coasts traditionally serve as the lifeblood of American communities from the Arctic to the Gulf of Mexico, creating economic opportunity and generating prosperity. The ocean economy supports millions of American jobs across a wide range of industries. With the onset of the greatest challenge to the American economy in a lifetime, America's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes must be poised to expeditiously provide critical goods and services, including food, fish, minerals, transportation, medicines, storm protection, tourism, and recreational opportunities as soon as our medical experts deem it safe.

The Honorable
Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Julie Packard

The Honorable
Leon Panetta

John Pappalardo

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOCI) is a prominent voice on ocean policy issues, with a deep history of focusing attention on actions at the federal level to change the way we manage our oceans and coasts, while also pursuing strategic opportunities to promote action by regional, state, and local leaders. Since 2005, the Joint Initiative has served as a trusted advisor to Republican and Democratic administrations and members of Congress, brought together all sectors of the ocean community to identify urgent priorities, communicated recommended actions to decision makers, and educated and cultivated ocean champions.

The Honorable
Pietro Parravano
Randy Repass

Andrew Rosenberg, Ph.D.

Paul Sandifer, Ph.D.

Economic recovery from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic requires targeted investment and innovative thought leadership about how to construct the US economy for a new age. Leaders in Congress and the Administration must not forget the importance of the ocean and coastal economy as we look ahead. Putting America back to work is paramount. This should be accomplished in ways that enhance our security, protect the health and quality of life of our citizens, and restore the major economic driver of our maritime nation: our oceans.

JOCI recommends five priorities for future investment to buoy the ocean economy.

INVEST IN COASTAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESTORATION

Investing in the protection of our coasts and oceans efficiently creates jobs, including immediate construction work and related employment. There is an urgent need for increased federal investment in ocean and coastal infrastructure projects, including wastewater and stormwater treatment, ports, power grids, habitat restoration, and fisheries restoration. These investments can prepare businesses and communities to withstand the multi-billion-dollar impacts of extreme weather events in the future. In fact, every dollar invested in strengthening coastal communities against storm surge mitigates six dollars in losses.

Any national infrastructure initiative should prioritize funding for projects that fortify our coasts and offer cost-effective protection for our communities. This funding could be administered through the National Ocean and Coastal Security Fund, explicitly established in law to put Americans to work adapting to forces like sea level rise, severe storms, and other coastal hazards, which threaten lives and economic prosperity in coastal communities across the country.

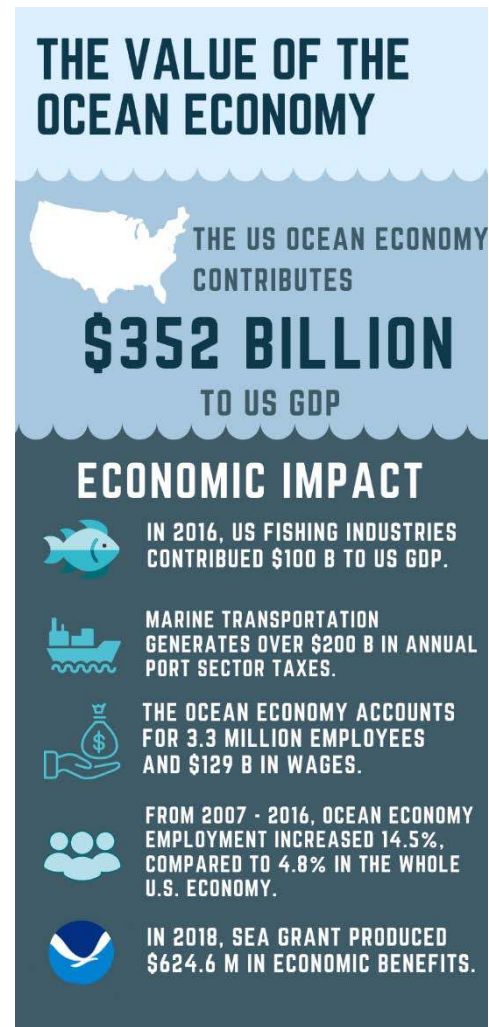
This Fund, administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, dedicates support to safeguard our natural resources and protect our communities from storms and flooding. It also brings long-term economic security by minimizing disruptions to businesses, transportation, commerce, and the emergency services on which communities depend.

SUPPORT OUR FISHERMEN

Fishing is a cornerstone of the ocean economy and an important aspect of American history and culture. In 2016, the commercial fishing and seafood industry supported 1.19 million jobs and generated \$144.3 billion in sales. However, America's fisheries are currently facing unprecedented challenges including changing ocean conditions, impacts from land-based activities, shifts in historic stock distributions, and increasingly complex data requirements. On top of this, COVID-19 is disrupting supply chains, seriously jeopardizing the livelihoods of fishermen, and profoundly impacting distributors and retailers. In order to maintain a viable fishing sector that delivers safe, high quality protein to the diets of Americans, the fishing industry must have relief in order to survive the disruption it is facing.

ADVANCE THE OCEAN SCIENCE ENTERPRISE

Investments in ocean science and research technologies generate innovation, address important national and global challenges, create new economic sectors and associated jobs, and develop technologies that save lives and protect property. Federal investment is needed to take advantage of



new technologies for the benefit of the American people, the economy, and our ocean ecosystems. In addition, with the ocean having already absorbed over 90 percent of the heat trapped by human-generated CO₂, the nexus of climate and oceans is clear. The US needs to lead when it comes to supporting climate research, education, and adaptation.

INVEST IN SOLUTIONS FOR A LOW-CARBON BLUE ECONOMY

The opportunity to rebuild also presents an opportunity to embrace a transition to a low-carbon economy. In the ocean space, this means considering the impacts of emissions reduction within the maritime community and supporting offshore renewable energy development. Leaders should consider greening our ports through electrification and making the infrastructure investments necessary to support alternative fuels that ships are and will increasingly rely on to reduce emissions. We must also stimulate the production of offshore renewable energy through enhanced regional coordination, technology development, and regulatory consistency. These activities will engage a diverse workforce in the short term and result in a more durable and sustainable ocean enterprise.

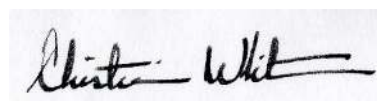
PRESERVE HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY ECONOMY

Coastal economies have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, with unprecedented impacts to tourism, trade, construction, and commercial and recreational fishing. These impacts have followed on the heels of devastating storms and harmful algal blooms. Coastal counties, which produce almost half of our GDP and one in 50 jobs, are directly dependent on the resources of the oceans and the Great Lakes. The important role that healthy oceans play in sustaining coastal communities and economies must be at the forefront of decision making going forward. The impacts of multiple, compounding stressors (including warming ocean temperatures, acidification, and hypoxia) are threatening ecosystem function. Addressing these challenges and securing the vitality of our coastal economies requires investing in ocean acidification and hypoxia research, developing collaborative management approaches to tackle compound problems, protecting ecologically important areas, and land-based strategies to reduce water pollution. All of these require long-term investment, but in the short term create the jobs that are essential to reviving our coastal economies and putting people back to work.

As you confront the greatest challenge of a generation, we stand ready to assist you in identifying opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and action. Our oceans are essential to the health, safety and quality of life of all Americans. We must work together to address the current crisis, and secure the future of our economy, and the health and wealth of our ocean nation.

Thank you for dedication, and all you are doing to most importantly protect the health of Americans, and facilitate a safe and timely economic recovery of the country. We stand ready to assist.

Sincerely,



Christine Todd Whitman
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative



Norman Y. Mineta
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative