

U.S. COMMISSION ON
OCEAN POLICY



KEYNOTE SPEECH AT THE OPENING PLENARY
CAPITOL HILL OCEANS WEEK 2003
“EXPLORING OUR OCEANS & MANAGING OUR MARINE AREAS”
BY
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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

THANK YOU CONGRESSMAN WELDON, AND GOOD MORNING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. IT IS INDEED A PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY TO HELP KICK-OFF CAPITOL HILL OCEANS WEEK AND YOUR TWO-DAY EXAMINATION OF THE FUTURE OF OCEANS EXPLORATION AND MARINE AREA MANAGEMENT.

I JUST WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON LAST NIGHT’S KICKOFF EVENT – ONE THAT HONORED TWO OUTSTANDING STEWARDS OF OUR NATION AND ITS SEAS – SENATOR FRITZ HOLLINGS AND CONGRESSMAN JIM SAXTON. I HAD THE DISTINCT HONOR OF INTRODUCING THE GOOD SENATOR FROM SOUTH CAROLINA LAST NIGHT, AND THAT LED ME TO REFLECT ON HOW FAR WE’VE COME IN THE 35 YEARS SINCE THE STRATTON COMMISSION REPORTED OUT.

I ALSO KNOW HOW FAR WE NEED TO GO TO HELP AVERT A CRISIS IN OUR OCEANS AND ON OUR COASTS. AS SENATOR HOLLINGS KNOWS FROM HIS VISIONARY WORK IN THIS AREA FOR OVER 35 YEARS, DETERMINING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE IS AN IMPORTANT BUT A SMALL PART OF THE BATTLE. ENACTING SIGNIFICANT POLICY CHANGES FOR THE FUTURE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP AND WHERE THE REAL FIGHTS WILL BE WAGED. BUT, AS I SAID LAST NIGHT, WITH GOOD STEWARDS AT THE HELM, WE CAN COUNT ON THEIR STRONG LEADERSHIP TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT AND WIN FOR OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

NOW, FOCUSING ON TODAY, IT'S BEEN AN EXCITING COUPLE OF WEEKS FOR OCEANS IN THE NEWS. INTEREST IS HIGH AND MOMENTUM IS BUILDING FOR MANY OF THE ISSUES FOCUSED ON AT THIS MEETING. AS YOU KNOW, THE PEW OCEANS COMMISSION RELEASED ITS REPORT LAST WEEK WHICH, IN TURN, TRIGGERED NEWS COVERAGE FOR MANY OF MARINE ISSUES, PARTICULARLY THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH LIVING MARINE RESOURCES. THEIR REPORT HAS ADDED POSITIVE MOMENTUM TO NATIONAL AWARENESS OF THE CRITICAL ROLE OCEANS PLAY IN OUR DAILY LIVES.

RIGHT NOW, PEOPLE ARE ASKING US, “. . . WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS OR THAT RECOMMENDATION MADE BY THE PEW OCEAN COMMISSION?” WELL, IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THERE IS COMMONALITY ON SELECTED ISSUES AND ANTICIPATED COMMONALITY BETWEEN SOME OF THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS AND WHAT THE U.S. COMMISSION HAS ALREADY DISCUSSED OPENLY IN PUBLIC AS DRAFT POLICY OPTIONS.

SPECIFICALLY, THE U.S. COMMISSION AGREES WITH MANY OF THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED IN THE PEW REPORT – FISHERIES, COASTAL DEVELOPMENT, NON-POINT POLLUTION, AND MANY OTHERS. THESE ISSUES WILL ALSO BE ADDRESSED IN OUR REPORT. HOWEVER, OUR MANDATE FROM THE *OCEANS ACT* REQUIRES US TO COVER A MUCH GREATER VARIETY OF ISSUES, PRIMARILY U.S.-BASED, BUT WITH GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS.

AN EXAMINATION OF OUR *TABLE OF CONTENTS* DEMONSTRATES HOW BROAD AND INCLUSIVE OUR REPORT WILL BE. WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE DOCUMENT, YOU WILL SEE THAT WE ARE STRIVING FOR A BALANCED REPORT THAT NOT ONLY EXAMINES THE ACTIVITIES, LAWS AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING COASTAL AND OCEAN MANAGEMENT, BUT ALSO RECOGNIZES THE INTERPLAY AMONG, ECOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC FACTORS. THE U.S. COMMISSION CONSIDERS ECONOMIC REALITIES TO BE CENTRAL TO DISCUSSIONS OF THE OCEAN. WE WILL DISCUSS THE COSTS TO THE NATION OF IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AS WELL AS THE INVESTMENT NEEDED TO TAKE PROACTIVE STEPS TO SOLVE THEM. OUR GOAL IS TO SUGGEST SPECIFIC, ACTIONABLE SOLUTIONS TO IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS.

JUST STEPPING BACK FROM THE REPORTS FOR A MOMENT, THE GREAT INTEREST IN PEW'S RECOMMENDATIONS UNDERSCORES SOMETHING I HAVE BEEN SAYING SINCE OUR COMMISSION WAS FORMED – THE TROUBLES FACING OUR OCEANS AND COASTS ARE REAL, BUT THEY ALSO PRESENT THIS NATION WITH NEW AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BEING BETTER STEWARDS OF THIS GREATEST OF EARTH'S NATURAL

RESOURCES. WE MUST SEIZE THE MOMENT TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT, FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES NOT ONLY FOR TODAY, BUT ALSO FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

SO, WITH MOMENTUM ON OUR SIDE, I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPITOL HILL OCEANS WEEK AND THE DISCUSSIONS THAT WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE NEXT TWO DAYS. WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT OCEANS ARE OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO US FOR A WIDE ARRAY OF REASONS. NOTWITHSTANDING THE EVENTS OF 9-11, THE NATIONAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES STILL DEPENDS IN LARGE MEASURE ON IT BEING BORDERED BY MAJOR BODIES OF WATER – THE ATLANTIC, PACIFIC, AND ARCTIC OCEANS, THE GULF OF MEXICO, AND OUR OWN “NORTHERN COAST,” OR CANADA’S “SOUTHERN COAST” BETTER KNOWN AS THE GREAT LAKES – AND ON OUR ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND AND BE SENSIBLE STEWARDS OF THOSE VAST BODIES OF WATER.

WHILE OCEANS COVER 70 PERCENT OF THE WORLD, THEY ARE THE LEAST EXPLORED AND LEAST UNDERSTOOD AREA OF THE PLANET. IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT THE OCEANS HOLD THE POTENTIAL FOR HELPING US RESOLVE SOME OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES OF TODAY AND OF THE FUTURE, FROM IMPROVING HEALTH TO MEETING QUALITY OF LIFE DEMANDS OF AN EXPANDING WORLD POPULATION. TO REALIZE THIS POTENTIAL, WE MUST SAFEGUARD THE HEALTH OF OCEAN ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURAL PROCESSES, WHICH DRIVE THESE ECOSYSTEMS. ALL OF THIS NEEDS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IN A MANNER THAT ALSO FACTORS IN THE IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND NATIONAL SECURITY ASPECTS OF THE OCEANS.

SINCE EARLY 2001, THE U.S. COMMISSION ON OCEAN POLICY HAS BEEN WORKING TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL OCEANS POLICY, AND THE FOLLOWING TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THIS GATHERING TRACK WELL WITH A GOOD PORTION OF THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION.

DRUGS FROM THE DEEP

FOR EXAMPLE, CONSIDER THIS MORNING’S “DRUGS FROM THE DEEP” DISCUSSION. OUR FINAL REPORT WILL INCLUDE A DISCUSSION OF MARINE BIOPRODUCT DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF A LARGER INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCEANS AND HUMAN HEALTH. WE WILL HIGHLIGHT THE IDENTIFICATION OF THOUSANDS OF NOVEL, MARINE-DERIVED BIOCHEMICALS OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES – A FACT THAT UNDERSCORES THAT THE VAST OCEANS ARE A SOURCE OF NOVEL PRODUCTS WITH POTENTIAL NOT

ONLY AS PHARMACEUTICALS, BUT ALSO AS MOLECULAR PROBES, NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS, COSMETICS, PESTICIDES, BIOMATERIALS, ENZYMES, AND PIGMENTS.

YESTERDAY MORNING SENATOR HOLLINGS INTRODUCED, WITH SENATOR STEVENS, THE “OCEANS AND HUMAN HEALTH ACT.” THIS LEGISLATION CALLS FOR A FEDERAL RESEARCH PROGRAM THAT EXAMINES OCEAN RESOURCES AND THEIR APPLICATIONS TO HUMAN HEALTH. IT ESTABLISHES A NATIONAL INTERAGENCY PROGRAM TO COORDINATE RESEARCH EFFORTS AND ENSURE AN ADEQUATE FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN THIS GROWING FIELD OF RESEARCH.

INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINED COASTAL AND OCEAN OBSERVING AND PREDICTION SYSTEM

WE HAVE ALSO DEVOTED MUCH ATTENTION TO WHAT WE ARE CALLING AN “INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINED COASTAL AND OCEAN OBSERVING AND PREDICTION SYSTEM.” WE BELIEVE SUCH A SYSTEM MUST BE ESTABLISHED AS A NATIONAL PRIORITY. THE OCEANS SCIENCE COMMUNITY HAS LONG ACCEPTED THIS CONCEPT UNDER THE TITLE OF AN INTEGRATED OR GLOBAL OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEM. OUR EXPANSION OF THE TITLE CAPTURES THE REAL-WORLD LONG-TERM VALUE OF SUCH A SYSTEM. NAMELY, IT MUST BE SUSTAINED, IT MUST EXPLICITLY INCLUDE OUR COASTAL WATERS, AND IT MUST PROVIDE PREDICTIONS SIMILAR TO WHAT THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HAS DONE FOR YEARS.

THIS NATION NEEDS TO HAVE A MUCH GREATER SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE OCEANS ENVIRONMENT THAN IS NOW THE CASE. AND, ONE FUNDAMENTAL TOOL FOR ADVANCING OUR UNDERSTANDING IS AN INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINED OCEAN AND COASTAL OBSERVING AND PREDICTION SYSTEM. WE HAVE REPEATEDLY HEARD TESTIMONY ADVOCATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH A SYSTEM THAT WOULD ALLOW GREATER ACQUISITION OF AND ACCESS TO OCEANOGRAPHIC DATA AND INFORMATIVE PRODUCTS WHICH WOULD SUPPORT, AMONG OTHER THINGS, OPERATIONAL, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND RESEARCH NEEDS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. THE COMMISSION WILL HEED THIS CALL AND MAKE STRONG SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS AREA; IT IS TIME TO MOVE FROM THE PLANNING STAGE AND MAKE THE NATIONAL COMMITMENT FOR ITS ACTUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.

ALREADY, THE ADMINISTRATION IS HEEDING THE CALL FOR SUCH A SYSTEM. AT THE RECENT G-8 SUMMIT IN FRANCE, THE MEMBER COUNTRIES ANNOUNCED PLANS TO BUILD A BETTER INTEGRATED GLOBAL OBSERVATION SYSTEM OVER 10 YEARS, TO BE KICKED OFF AT THE EARTH OBSERVATION SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON, D.C. ON JULY 31, 2003. THIS SHOULD ADD FURTHER MOMENTUM TO OUR COMMISSION'S WORK PRODUCT.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

THE G-8 NATIONS ALSO CALLED FOR MEASURES TO PREVENT MARINE POLLUTION AND IMPROVE TANKER SAFETY, AND ADOPTED A PLAN OF ACTION TO HELP HALVE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITHOUT ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION BY 2015, UNDERSCORING THAT NO DISCUSSION OF U.S. OCEAN POLICY CAN EFFECTIVELY IGNORE THE "INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE." FOR THIS REASON, THE U.S. COMMISSION ON OCEAN POLICY REPORT WILL DEVOTE A CHAPTER TO AN ASSESSMENT OF THE U.S. ROLE IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. THE INTERNATIONAL ASPECT OF OCEAN MANAGEMENT IS SO IMPORTANT, IT WAS UNDERSCORED AS A "MUST DO" IN THE *OCEANS ACT OF 2000*, WHICH MANDATED OUR COMMISSION TO ADDRESS THE PRESERVATION OF THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES AS AN INTERNATIONAL LEADER IN OCEAN AND COASTAL ACTIVITIES. ONE MILESTONE FROM THE COMMISSION'S WORK TO DATE IS THE UNANIMOUS ADOPTION IN NOVEMBER 2001 OF A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE UNITED NATIONS LAW OF THE SEA CONVENTION, WHICH IS ANOTHER FACET OF INTERNATIONAL OCEAN POLICY SUPPORTED AT THE RECENT G-8 MEETING.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AND HABITAT RESTORATION

THE ISSUES SURROUNDING "MARINE PROTECTED AREAS" AND "HABITAT RESTORATION" WILL ALSO BE ADDRESSED ON OUR REPORT. MARINE RESOURCES ARE CLEARLY A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF THE NATION'S ECONOMIC WELL-BEING. WE WILL CONTINUE TO DEPEND ON OCEANS FOR TRADE, TO DEPEND ON MARINE FISHERIES FOR FOOD, AND TO DEPEND ON MARINE-RELATED TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR REVENUE. YET, WE HAVE HEARD THAT THESE RESOURCES ARE BEING PUT IN JEOPARDY BY AN ARRAY OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES. WITH THE HUMAN POPULATION ON THE RISE, PARTICULARLY IN COASTAL AREAS, OUR INCREASING IMPACT ON COASTAL AND OCEAN ENVIRONMENTS IS UNDENIABLE AND, IN SOME CASES, SEVERE. CLEARLY, MARINE PROTECTED AREAS ARE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR PROTECTING FRAGILE AND COMPLEX ECOSYSTEMS, BUT THIS TOOL OUGHT TO BE USED ONLY AFTER GIVING COMPREHENSIVE CONSIDERATION TO THE

SCIENTIFIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS SUCH A DESIGNATION WOULD CAUSE. IN SOME AREAS, THERE MIGHT BE OTHER TOOLS BETTER SUITED TO CRAFTING SOUND OCEAN POLICY. FACTORING IN THESE OTHER CRITERIA WHEN DETERMINING WHETHER TO DECLARE A REGION A MARINE PROTECTED AREA IS IMPORTANT. AS WE WERE TOLD DURING OUR FACT-GATHERING PHASE, ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE USER CONFLICTS AND STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THESE COMPETING INTERESTS HAVE HAD NO CONSISTENT PATTERN OF SUCCESS TO DATE.

IN OUR FACT-FINDING PHASE WE ALSO HEARD FROM EXPERTS AND THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE PROTECTION OF PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FEATURES OF OUR OCEAN AND COASTAL ENVIRONMENT. MANY PRESENTERS STRESSED THE NEED TO PROTECT AND RESTORE CORAL REEFS AND OTHER ECOLOGICALLY UNIQUE AND IMPORTANT COASTAL AND ESTUARINE HABITATS AND TO PRESERVE MARINE BIODIVERSITY. WE REPORTED LAST SEPTEMBER IN OUR PRELIMINARY FINDINGS THAT THE PROTECTION OF THESE AREAS REQUIRES A MORE EFFECTIVE AND COORDINATED APPROACH TO AVOID LONG-TERM DAMAGE, AND THAT THESE FEATURES MAY REQUIRE SPECIAL PROTECTION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS OF AMERICANS.

MANAGING INVASIVE SPECIES

TOMORROW'S DISCUSSION OF INVASIVE SPECIES IS ALSO CRITICALLY IMPORTANT. INVASIVE SPECIES CHALLENGE US ON EVERY SCALE FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL. CONSERVATION BIOLOGISTS RANK INVASIVE SPECIES SECOND ONLY TO HABITAT DESTRUCTION AS THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT TO ENDANGERED SPECIES. ON BROADER SCALES, THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT INVASIVE SPECIES ARE A SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL THREAT. SOME SCIENTISTS DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM OF INVASIVE SPECIES AS "BIOLOGICAL POLLUTION" WHOSE POPULATION, UNLIKE CONCENTRATIONS OF SOME CHEMICAL POLLUTANTS THAT MAY DEGRADE OVER TIME, CAN PERSIST, INCREASE AND SPREAD THROUGH TIME.

AS WE TRAVELED THE NATION LAST YEAR, WE HEARD COMPELLING TESTIMONY FROM EXPERTS IN EVERY COASTAL AREA WHO SAID THAT INVASIVE SPECIES GENERATE PROBLEMS FOR THE LONG-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH OF OUR NATION. ONE EXAMPLE: AS YOU KNOW, SINCE THE ZEBRA MUSSEL WAS UNINTENTIONALLY INTRODUCED INTO THE GREAT LAKES IN THE 1980'S, MUNICIPALITIES AND INDUSTRIES IN THE GREAT LAKES HAVE PAID DEARLY. IN FACT, IN 2001, ADDRESSING ZEBRA MUSSEL INVASION WAS PROJECTED TO COST AN ESTIMATED \$3.1 BILLION OVER THE NEXT 10

YEARS. CLEARLY, THESE ARE PROBLEMS BOTH ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC IN SCOPE.

ENJOYING MARINE AREAS: PUBLIC INTERACTION

AS YOU LOOK FORWARD TO TOMORROW'S DISCUSSION ENTITLED ENJOYING MARINE AREAS, CONSIDER THAT THE PUBLIC SHOULD NOT ONLY CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE OCEANS, BUT MUST ALSO BE MADE AWARE OF THE LARGER IMPORTANCE OF OCEANS TO OUR NATION'S PROSPERITY, SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH. THAT IS WHY EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES THE COMMISSION IS ADDRESSING. AND, A KEY COMPONENT OF EDUCATION IS INCREASING OCEAN AWARENESS AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC – THE RECREATIONAL USERS OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT.

CURRENTLY, THE U.S. COMMISSION IS EXAMINING MECHANISMS FOR REACHING MORE PEOPLE WITH A MESSAGE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OCEAN RESOURCES TO OUR NATION AND HOW CRITICAL RESPONSIBLE ENJOYMENT OF OUR OCEANS AND COASTS IS TO THEIR PRESERVATION. EFFORTS NEED TO RANGE FROM THE YOUNGEST SCHOOLCHILDREN TO THE MOST SENIOR OF CITIZENS AMONG US, FROM THE COASTS TO THE HEARTLAND. ALL OF US NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

I WOULD LIKE TO WRAP UP WITH THIS THOUGHT, AND YOU HAVE HEARD THIS FROM BEFORE – PERHAPS THE MOST SERIOUS CHALLENGE OF ALL IS WHETHER THERE IS ENOUGH WILL, ENOUGH OF A SENSE OF URGENCY, WITHIN THE HALLS OF CONGRESS, THE WHITE HOUSE AND AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO ACCEPT, IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE THE POLICIES NEEDED TO RESOLVE THE ISSUES WE FACE AND GRASP NEW OPPORTUNITIES AS THEY ARISE. THE COMMISSION THINKS SO. BUT, TO SUCCEED, WE'RE GOING TO NEED A "FULL COURT PRESS" FROM YOU AND ALL OCEAN STAKEHOLDERS. THE COMMISSION IS COUNTING ON THAT.

FINALLY, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE ORGANIZERS OF CAPITOL HILL OCEANS WEEK FOR INVITING ME HERE TODAY, AND THE SPONSORS – THE NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY FOUNDATION, THE SENATE COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE; THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE; THE HOUSE SCIENCE COMMITTEE; AND THE HOUSE OCEANS CAUCUS. GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR MEETINGS AND I LOOK FORWARD TO SOME FEEDBACK AND INSIGHT BASED ON YOUR DISCUSSIONS OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

THANK YOU.