



*******NEWS RELEASE*******

June 10, 2003

Media Contact: Laurie Howell

310-729-8681

Laurie@nmsfocean.org



**CAPITOL HILL OCEANS WEEK 2003
PLACES OCEAN POLICY ISSUES PROMINENTLY BEFORE CONGRESS**

(Washington, DC) Capitol Hill Oceans Week, June 11-12, is expected to draw scores of ocean experts and advocates from government, private industry, nonprofits, and academia, including renowned undersea explorers **Jean-Michel Cousteau** and **Dr. Sylvia Earle**; Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality **James L. Connaughton**; U.S. Ocean Policy Commission Chairman **Admiral James D. Watkins USN (Ret.)**; Members of Congress, including U.S. House Oceans Caucus Co-Chairs **Tom Allen, Sam Farr, Jim Greenwood, and Curt Weldon**; and other Members of Congress that include **Senator Ernest F. Hollings** and **Representatives Neil Abercrombie, Lois Capps, Wayne Gilchrest, Bart Stupak, and W. J. "Billy" Tauzin.**

The first day of the Symposium, Wednesday – June 11th, will address topics related to ‘**Exploring Our Oceans**,’ such as pharmaceutical discoveries and the future of ocean-derived energy resources. The second day of the Symposium, Thursday – June 12th, will feature the ***Ocean Technology Fair***, consisting of more than 20 exhibits that highlight some of the most successful marine management and exploration programs in the country. This day will focus on ‘**Managing Our Marine Areas**,’ with experts discussing topics that include invasive species and public interaction with protected areas. Panel discussions will begin with an overview from a Member of Congress.

“Growing up and living my life along the great Monterey Bay taught me that it is our responsibility to be stewards of our oceans and coastal communities,” said **Congressman Sam Farr, who will participate in the ‘Managing Marine Areas: Success Stories’ Panel.** “We begin Capitol Hill Oceans Week with the recent release of the Pew Oceans Commission’s first review of the state of our oceans and the forthcoming release of the U.S. Ocean Commission report, so this will be an especially great forum for my colleagues and their staff to learn more about how we can conserve and protect our oceans so we can ensure that our children will be able to enjoy them just as we have.”

Now in its third year, Capitol Hill Oceans Week (CHOW), coordinated by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, has established itself as one of the most important events of the year for exchanging knowledge and ideas about ocean issues and policies. Congressional Co-Hosts include Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, the House Committee on Resources, the House Committee on Science, and the House Oceans Caucus. “Capitol Hill Oceans Week places ocean issues prominently before our nation’s leaders and builds bridges among the various ocean constituents with a goal to ultimately make progress in areas of common ground,” said **Lori Arguelles, the Foundation’s Executive Director.**

- more -

House Oceans Caucus Co-Chairs, Congressmen Tom Allen, Sam Farr, and Curt Weldon will deliver the Opening Plenary for the first day, 'Exploring Our Oceans.' "Capitol Hill Oceans Week is an excellent opportunity for information sharing, discussion, and stimulation of action on the current issues regarding our vital ocean resources," said **Allen, who is participating in the 'Ocean Observing Systems' Panel.** "With the June 4th release of the Pew Oceans Commission Report and the forthcoming report of the congressionally-mandated U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, CHOW 2003 is especially timely and the events this week will be particularly useful as we if they help us focus our national conversation into practical, forward steps."

The Opening Plenary will be followed by a keynote address from **Admiral James D. Watkins, USN (Ret.), Chair of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.** "For those of us actively engaged in the ocean policy arena, events such as Capitol Hill Oceans Week are extremely valuable," said Watkins. "Bringing together a wide range of experts and stakeholders on an annual basis adds to our scientific understanding of ocean resources and should help all of us work together to more effectively manage those resources."

'**Exploring Our Oceans**' will focus key topics in ocean exploration, including breakthroughs in medicines created from marine-derived products, energy issues related to the oceans, the development, use and future of ocean observing systems, and an international perspective on ocean exploration. The luncheon keynote address will be delivered by **National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Trustee Jean-Michel Cousteau,** a man whose name has become synonymous with ocean exploration and conservation.

"We are at a watershed time of new information, new initiatives and greater unity than I have ever seen regarding protecting our world ocean. That heightens the growing excitement surrounding ocean issues in today's political forums and I am especially proud to be a Trustee of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation," said **Cousteau, also President of the Ocean Futures Society.** "In the atmosphere of all this new research and focus on the decline of our world's marine species, I know we will build on last year's success to bring the ocean to the forefront of the political agenda of the 108th Congress. This is critical so we can protect not only our ocean, but humanity itself."

The second day of the Symposium, 'Managing Our Marine Areas', will open with a keynote address by **Foundation Trustee and National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence, Dr. Sylvia Earle,** who has led more than 50 expeditions totaling more than 6,000 hours underwater, earning her the nickname "Her Deepness." Dr. Earle's passionate dedication to the preservation of marine life and her pioneering research on marine ecosystems led *Time* magazine to name her the first "hero for the planet" in 1998.

Following the morning keynote speech, panels throughout the day will focus on the management of marine areas, drawing from real-life examples around the U.S. Key topics include the successful management of marine areas, the restoration efforts related to key habitats, the challenges of dealing with invasive species, and the variety of ways the public can enjoy and help preserve these key areas. It also features a luncheon keynote address by **James L. Connaughton, Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality.** "Effective management of our coastal and marine areas is critical to the health of our marine ecosystems," said Connaughton. "By utilizing traditional policies and new, innovative policies that employ market forces, partnerships, performance standards, and incentives for stewardship, we can achieve this goal."

3-3-3 CHOW 2003

The panel discussion following lunch, 'Enjoying Marine Areas: Public Interaction', will address the delicate balance between public enjoyment and public stewardship of our marine areas. The panel will open with brief remarks by **Congressman Neil Abercrombie, a member of the House Oceans Caucus**. "Events such as Capitol Hill Oceans Week draw greater attention to the undersea realm, which covers two-thirds of our planet," said Abercrombie, "And I'm hopeful that this symposium will highlight the importance of ocean issues to all the members of Congress and ultimately lead to a greater commitment of resources to the study and protection of our marine environment."

Capitol Hill Oceans Week 2003 is co-sponsored by BellSouth, the Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation, AT&T, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Geographic Society, the American Petroleum Institute, Booz Allen Hamilton, the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE), the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP) in affiliation with Coastal America, The Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation, Mote Scientific Foundation, Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration, the National Marine Manufacturers Association, the National Ocean Industries Association, and the Sea Grant Association.

Federal Partners include the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Water and, under the U.S. Department of Commerce, the NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program, the NOAA Office of Exploration, and the NOAA Restoration Center.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation supports the outreach and education efforts of the National Marine Sanctuary System, part of the U.S. Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Through public and private sector partnerships, the Foundation creates conservation-based programs designed to preserve, protect and promote these Sanctuaries, our underwater treasures.

Schedule Media Coverage with Laurie Howell – see contact information above. For more detailed information on Capitol Hill Oceans Week 2003, please see www.nmsfocean.org.