



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

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CAPITOL HILL OCEANS WEEK 2004 PLACES OCEAN POLICY ISSUES PROMINENTLY BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS

(Washington, DC) Capitol Hill Oceans Week, June 9-10, is expected to draw scores of ocean experts and advocates from government, private industry, non-profits and academia. Keynotes speakers include renowned undersea explorer **Jean-Michel Cousteau**, U.S. Department of Commerce **Secretary Donald L. Evans**, U.S. Ocean Policy Commission **Chairman Admiral James D. Watkins USN (Ret.)**, and Coordinator for the UN Global Program of Action **Dr. Veerle Vandeweerd**. Participating Members of Congress include House Oceans Caucus Co-Chairs **Tom Allen, Sam Farr, Jim Greenwood and Curt Weldon**, as well as **Vernon Ehlers**.

The first day of the symposium, Wednesday, June 9th, will address topics related to ‘**Managing Our Marine Areas**,’ and will focus on the importance of ecosystem-based management. Panelists will examine the definition of an ecosystem and its scientific and economic value, discuss current uses of the ocean, and share examples of how ecosystem based management can be applied. The day will open with a **morning keynote address by Admiral James D. Watkins, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy**. “When it comes to the oceans, thankfully, we have every reason to be optimistic,” said Watkins. “It’s important to remember that although the troubles facing our oceans and coasts are real, they also present this nation with new and exciting opportunities for becoming better stewards of earth’s greatest natural resource.”

The luncheon keynote speaker on June 9th will be Jean-Michel Cousteau, President of Ocean Futures and a Trustee of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. “As always, it is an honor to participate in Capitol Hill Oceans Week,” said Cousteau. “I travel the world sharing the urgency of responsible ocean management, but nowhere is that message more important than on Capitol Hill where this country’s leaders help chart the course for our oceans and coastlines.”

The second day of the symposium, Thursday June 10th, is entitled ‘**Wonders of the Ocean World: Exploring, Monitoring and Educating**,’ and will cover a wide array of issues. The luncheon keynote speaker will be **Donald L. Evans, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce**. Panel sessions include Exploring Our Oceans, Observing, Monitoring and Managing Ocean Data, and Creating an Ocean Literate Society. Each panel discussion will begin with an overview from a Member of Congress. The day will kick off with a **morning keynote address by Dr. Veerle Vandeweerd, Coordinator for the United Nations’ Global Program of Action**.

“All people should be aware of the importance of oceans for life on earth and we need to accelerate our efforts,” said Vandeweerd. “To manage oceans wisely and effectively, we must have, among other things, good data and policy relevant assessments at the regional, national, and global levels, as well as strengthened cooperation and new forms of partnership, as exemplified by the *White Water to Blue Water* partnership.”

Now in its fourth year, Capitol Hill Oceans Week (CHOW) is coordinated by the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation. “Capitol Hill Oceans Week places ocean issues prominently before our nation’s leaders and builds bridges among various ocean constituencies,” said National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Executive Director Lori Arguelles. “Our ultimate goal is to use this forum to continue the momentum created by the recent release of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy draft report and the Pew Oceans Commission report released last June.”

Exhibitors will join the symposium on Wednesday, June 9th for the *Ocean Fair*, which will feature some of the most successful marine management and exploration programs in the country. Congressional co-hosts of CHOW 2003 include the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; the House Committee on Science; and the House Oceans Caucus.

Capitol Hill Oceans Week is sponsored by the Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation, Perot Systems Government Services Inc., Booz Allen Hamilton, Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education, Mystic Aquarium and Institute for Exploration’s Immersion Project, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Geographic Society, Bombardier Recreational Products Inc., Center for SeaChange, Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership/Coastal America, International SeaKeepers Society, Mote Marine Laboratory, National Marine Manufacturers Association, National Ocean Industries Association, and the Ocean Foundation.

Federal partners include the U.S. Department of Commerce’s NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program and NOAA Office of Exploration, the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Minerals Management Service, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Water.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the private sector, non-profit partner to the federally managed National Marine Sanctuary Program, part of the U.S. Commerce Department’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation works to complement the outreach and education efforts of the nationwide network of 13 marine sanctuaries. Stretching from the Flower Garden Banks in the Gulf of Mexico to Thunder Bay in the Great Lakes, and from the Hawaiian Islands to the Florida Keys, the National Marine Sanctuary Program covers approximately 18,000 square nautical miles.

Media must schedule with Laurie Howell – see above. Also see more details at www.nmsfocean.org.