



For Immediate Release
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**Former White House Chief of Staff Leon E. Panetta
Honored
For Leadership to Protect, Promote Nation's Oceans**

**National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
2006 Annual Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Media Note: Photos from Ceremony Available,
Please Call Contact**

Washington, DC - In recognition of his leadership and longstanding commitment to protecting the nation's ocean and coastal waters and resources, the Honorable Leon E. Panetta received the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NSMF) Lifetime Achievement Award during a June 13th dinner at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC. Panetta will be honored with fellow Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Co-Chair Admiral James D. Watkins (Ret.).

"Having grown up in Monterey, CA, the oceans and coasts have been a big part of my life. I have always believed that our nation's ocean and coastal waters are a vital part of our country's health and prosperity," said Panetta. "It is an honor to receive such a prestigious award. I hope I can continue to bring more attention to the important issues surrounding our oceans and work even harder to protect and restore this precious natural resource."

For much of his distinguished life in public service, Leon Panetta has been a passionate advocate for our nation's oceans. While a member of the House of Representatives, Panetta authored numerous successful measures to protect the California coast, and was a major factor in establishing the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Panetta also served on the board of the Monterey Bay Aquarium and is a NSMF trustee.

Panetta was Chair of the Pew Oceans Commission, which called for reforms in U.S. ocean management and ocean governance, preserving and protecting coastal habitat, and fisheries, creating sustainable marine aquaculture, and preventing the collapse of ocean ecosystems, and he currently serves as Co-Chair of the Joint Ocean Commission.

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Page 2/Panetta 2006 NMSF Lifetime Achievement Award

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative grew out of the ocean advocacy work done by Panetta's Pew Ocean Commission and Admiral Watkins' US Commission on Ocean Policy. The Initiative has worked tirelessly to push for reform to implement and fund ocean policies that protect and enhance the value of our oceans, coasts, and their resources for future use.

"It is only fitting that Leon Panetta and Admiral James Watkins both receive this Lifetime Achievement Award together," said NMSF Chairman Terry Garcia. "Their separate work on ocean and coastal issues has been enhanced by their coming together to form the Joint Ocean Commission and is helping to ensure the viability and security of our nation's waters."

The NMSF Leadership Awards Dinner is held in conjunction with the 2006 Capitol Hill Oceans week, a three-day symposium that features ocean policy experts from government, private industry, nonprofits and academia. Participants look to raise awareness of important ocean and coastal issues among our nation's leaders and to build bridges among various ocean constituencies. Topics covered during this year's symposium will include alternative energy sources, marine debris, invasive species, the Census of Marine Life, the next steps in the development of an ocean observations system, a legislative agenda for Capitol Hill, and a regional Gulf of Maine panel focused on ecosystem management innovations.

Panetta and Admiral Watkins are being honored along with U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) and Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA), both of whom are receiving 2006 Leadership Awards from the NMSF.

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is the private, non-profit partner to the federally managed National Marine Sanctuary Program. It was created to inspire all people to preserve, protect and promote our nationwide network of marine sanctuaries. The 14 sites within the national marine sanctuary system protect oceans and great lakes from the Florida Keys to the Hawaiian Islands and from Lake Huron to the Gulf of Mexico.