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Obama Administration Officials Announce the Final Recommendations of the Ocean Policy Task Force

WASHINGTON, DC – Obama Administration officials today released the *Final Recommendations of the Ocean Policy Task Force*, which would establish a National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, Coasts, and Great Lakes (National Policy) and create a National Ocean Council (NOC) to strengthen ocean governance and coordination. The *Final Recommendations* prioritize actions for the NOC to pursue, and call for a flexible framework for coastal and marine spatial planning to address conservation, economic activity, user conflict, and sustainable use of the ocean, our coasts and the Great Lakes.

The NOC would coordinate across the Federal Government to implement the National Policy. The *Final Recommendations* also call for the establishment of a Governance Coordinating Committee to formally engage with state, tribal, and local authorities. The *Final Recommendations* are expected to be adopted into an Executive Order by President Obama.

“President Obama recognized that our uses of the ocean are expanding at a rate that challenges our ability to manage significant and often competing demands,” said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. “With a growing number of recreational, scientific, energy, and security activities, we need a national policy that sets the United States on a new path for the conservation and sustainable use of these critical natural resources.”

Dr. John P. Holdren, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology and Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, lauded the policy as a significant step towards securing the sustained well-being of America’s waters and coastal regions.

“A National Ocean Policy reflects and affirms the invaluable role that science plays in the stewardship of these cherished resources,” said Dr. Holdren. “The work of the National Ocean Council will ensure that future generations of Americans are able to reap the immeasurable and undeniable benefits of healthy ocean, coastal, and Great Lake ecosystems.”

“This first-of-its kind framework will help our nation plan wisely for the future of our oceans and coastlines, so that we can continue to experience their beauty and bounty for generations to come,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “With 2 billion acres we help oversee on the Outer Continental Shelf, Interior is a proud partner in this initiative, and we look forward to helping coordinate the science, policies and management of how we use, conserve, and protect these public treasures.”

“Protecting our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes is critical to the health of our communities, vibrancy of our economy and overall security of our nation,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “The new National Policy provides a clear road map for all federal agencies to work together, with local partners, to protect our vital waters for future generations. EPA is proud to have played a role in the development of this plan and the continued protection of our treasured natural resources.”

“Today, possibly more so than any point in our nation’s history, we appreciate that healthy oceans matter,” said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. “Today we extend our nation’s proud conservation ethic beyond our shores and into our coasts, oceans and Great Lakes.”

“The Department of Homeland Security and Coast Guard applaud the Oceans Policy Task Force's efforts to fulfill President Obama's vision for a national approach to maintaining the health and vibrancy of the world's maritime regions,” said Admiral Bob Papp, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. “The Task Force's *Final Recommendations* provide a balance between protecting and preserving the marine environment, and promoting economic progress. The framework protects the interests of all users, improves ocean stewardship, and provides the foundation for improving maritime governance at the international, regional, state, and local levels.”

“The Department of the Navy strongly supports the principles and framework laid out in this new Executive Order,” said Donald Schregardus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Environment. “Strengthening the vital link between our global maritime mission and our responsibility to safeguard the environment is a key component to our environmental strategy. The establishment of the National Ocean Council will be important in advancing this strategic priority.”

In June 2009, President Obama created the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and charged it with developing recommendations to enhance national stewardship of the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes and promote the long term conservation and use of these resources. The Task Force was led by CEQ and included 24 senior-level policy officials from across the Federal Government.

At the President’s direction, the Task Force released an *Interim Report* in September 2009 and an *Interim Framework for Effective Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning* in December 2009. Each of these reports was made available online for public comment. The Task Force received and reviewed close to 5,000 written comments from Congress, stakeholders, and the public before finalizing its recommendations. The Task Force’s *Final Recommendations* combine and update the proposals contained in the two earlier reports.

The National Policy includes a set of guiding principles for management decisions and actions toward stewardship that ensures that the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes are healthy and resilient, safe and productive, and understood and treasured so as to promote the well-being, prosperity, and security of present and future generations. It prioritizes actions, including ecosystem-based management, regional ecosystem protection and restoration, and strengthened and integrated observing systems, that

seek to address some of the most pressing challenges facing the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. These strategies and objectives provide a bridge between the National Policy and action on the ground.

The National Policy identifies coastal and marine spatial planning as a priority. Marine spatial planning offers a comprehensive, integrated approach to planning and managing uses and activities over the long term. Under the National Policy, coastal and marine spatial planning would be regional in scope, developed cooperatively among Federal, state, tribal, and local authorities, and include substantial stakeholder, scientific, and public input. The coastal and marine spatial planning framework:

- Establishes a new regional approach to how we use and protect the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes to decrease user conflicts, improve planning and regulatory efficiencies and decrease costs and delays, and preserve critical ecosystem services.
- Creates a comprehensive alternative to sector-by-sector and statute-by-statute decision-making.
- Establishes regional planning bodies, bringing Federal, state, and tribal partners together in an unprecedented manner to jointly plan for the future of the ocean, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.
- Ensures science-based information is at the heart of decision-making.
- Emphasizes stakeholder and public participation.

The National Ocean Council would plan to hold its first meeting later this summer to begin the immediate work of implementing the National Policy. The full text of the National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, Coasts, and Great Lakes is available at www.whitehouse.gov/oceans.

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