

February 5th, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As marine scientists who are deeply concerned about the health of the world's oceans, we commend you for initiating America's first National Ocean Policy and urge you to make conservation the foundation of this policy.

When America's current laws and ocean agencies were established after the 1969 Stratton Commission report, [*Our Nation and the Sea. A Plan for National Action*](#), the prevailing view was that oceans are invulnerable. But 40 years of scientific research has shown that our oceans are imperiled. As 1,605 scientists from 70 countries warned in [*Troubled Waters: A Call for Action*](#) in 1998, we are rapidly emptying our oceans of fish, degrading coastal waters with nutrients and toxic chemicals, and threatening marine ecosystems by adding CO₂ to our atmosphere.

The oceans are, by far, the largest component of the Earth's life support system, and the United States has the world's biggest stake in protecting, recovering and maintaining their diversity and productivity because we have more ocean under our control than any other nation, an expanse greater than our land area. The biodiversity and productivity of these waters protect our coastal communities and generate many millions of jobs and many billions of dollars to our economy.

Unfortunately, federal agencies have long focused mainly on their individual mandates rather than the overall health of our oceans, thereby jeopardizing the interests of the American people. A National Ocean Policy needs to direct federal agencies unambiguously to work together effectively to protect, maintain and restore the diversity and productivity of America's marine ecosystems as economic activities in our oceans expand.

We are deeply grateful for your leadership in formulating a comprehensive ecosystem-based national ocean, coastal and Great Lakes policy. We look forward to seeing an Executive Order that reflects new scientific understanding of our oceans' values and vulnerabilities, and offer you our unstinting support in realizing our shared vision for healthy and secure oceans.

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