



President Bush Continues His Strong Commitment to Our Oceans and Proposes Substantial New Funding for Oceans Priorities

“The vibrant beauty of the oceans is a blessing to our country. And it’s a blessing to the world. The oceans contain countless natural treasures. They carry much of our trade; they provide food and recreation for billions of people. We have a responsibility, a solemn responsibility, to be good stewards of the oceans and the creatures who inhabit them.” –George W. Bush, June 15, 2006

On December 17, 2004, President Bush released the U.S. Ocean Action Plan and created a Cabinet-level Committee on Ocean Policy to accomplish 88 actions to strengthen and better coordinate U.S. ocean policy and make our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes cleaner, healthier and more productive. Today, Senior Administration officials furthered this commitment by:

- Announcing new funding for oceans projects
- Releasing the Ocean Research Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy
- Releasing a progress report of Ocean Action Plan accomplishments

President Bush Recognizes The Importance of the Oceans to Our National Heritage, Economy, and Security and Reaffirms His Commitment to Protecting Them With Over \$143 Million of New Funding for Priority Oceans Projects. The President's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget requests \$143 million in new funding over the 2007 budget request level for high priority projects that will advance ocean science and research, protect and restore sensitive marine and coastal areas, and ensure sustainable use of ocean resources.

➤ **Advancing Ocean Science and Research (\$80M):**

The Budget provides a total of \$40 million to address near-term ocean research priorities established by the Ocean Research Priorities Plan. New funding to address these priorities is provided to NOAA, NSF, and USGS. These interagency efforts will build off of and include ongoing activities at multiple agencies. The Budget also proposes \$8 million to define the outer limits of the U.S. continental shelf (areas beyond 200 miles from the U.S. coast that meet certain geological criteria). Defining those limits will allow the U.S. to confirm its resource rights, which contain an estimated \$1.2 trillion worth of resources. In addition, \$40 million is included for NOAA to develop an operational ocean monitoring network, for technology and other infrastructure to support ocean science, for International Polar Year activities, and for research on protected species and commercial fisheries. The Budget also continues funding for NSF’s Oceans Observations Initiative, which will provide important infrastructure to support sustained ocean observations and research.

➤ **Protecting and Restoring Coastal and Marine Areas (\$38M)**

The Budget includes \$8 million to support the management of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument, which the President designated in June 2006. The Monument, which protects over 4,500 square miles of coral reefs and over 7,000 marine species, is the largest single conservation area in the world. An additional \$30 million is provided to work with State and local partners to protect valuable coastal and marine habitat, including a project to eventually restore nearly 1000 stream miles of habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and other fish species, and projects in the Gulf of Mexico identified as priorities by the Gulf of Mexico Regional Alliance articulated in the *Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts*, released by the Governors of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

➤ **Ending Overfishing and Ensuring Sustainable Use of Ocean Resources (\$25M)**

Following the historic bipartisan commitment to end overfishing with reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevens Fisheries Conservation Act, the President requests \$20 million to implement requirements of the legislation. This includes funding (\$6M) to facilitate market-based approaches to fisheries management such as Limited Access Privilege (LAP) programs that provide exclusive privileges to harvest a quantity of fish. The Administration has set a goal of doubling the number of LAP systems in use by the year 2010. The President requests \$3 million to ensure sustainable access to seafood through offshore aquaculture. The Administration has proposed legislation to establish clear regulatory authority and permitting processes for offshore aquaculture in order to encourage and facilitate development of environmentally sustainable commercial opportunities. Funding is also provided for NOAA to meet the management challenges of assessing and mitigating the impacts of sound from human activities, such as national defense readiness and energy exploration and development on marine mammals (\$2M).

President Bush Is Committed to Leading the Way on Ocean Research with the Ocean Research Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy (ORPP). The ORPP identifies national ocean research priorities for the next ten years to ensure that the management, use, and protection of our ocean ecosystem is based on the strongest available science to promote health and sustainability. Developed with extensive input from the ocean community, this document represents the first national effort to identify research priorities, and has a focus on understanding interactions between society and the ocean. The successful pursuit of these national priorities rests on the active engagement and collaboration with public and private sector partners at local, state, regional, Federal, and international levels. The ORPP lays out four areas of research that should be pursued in the next four years:

1. **Response of Coastal Ecosystems to Persistent Forcing and Extreme Events** to provide better forecasts of coastal response to a variety of natural events and human influenced processes, such as hurricanes and non-point source pollution.
2. **Comparative Analysis of Marine Ecosystem Organization** to understand the complex dynamics of marine ecosystems and use that understanding to improve management of these critical areas and their resources.
3. **Sensors for Marine Ecosystems** to develop the tools needed to collect key, but elusive, scientific information on various biological and chemical processes necessary to better understand marine ecosystems.
4. **Meridional Overturning Variability** to enhance ongoing efforts to observe, understand, and predict changes in ocean circulation in the Atlantic Ocean, a key driver of climate variability and change.

This Administration Is Continuing To Build Off Two Successful Years Of Ocean Conservation Accomplishments Carried Out Through The President's Ocean Action Plan. The Cabinet-level Committee on Ocean Policy released the U.S. Ocean Action Plan Implementation Update, which provides a progress report of a banner year in oceans conservation including:

- Creation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument – the largest single conservation area in our Nation's history and the largest protected marine area in the world
- Reauthorization the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- Support of state-led regional management partnerships, including the Gulf of Mexico Alliance
- Negotiations of a U.N. resolution to stop destructive fishing practices on the high seas
- Finalization of a conservation plan with the State of Florida for the Dry Tortugas in the Florida Keys
- Enhancement of ocean literacy initiatives and interagency cooperation, including a national Conference on Ocean Literacy during National Oceans Week

Given the significant progress the Administration has made in completing the commitments of the OAP (83% of the actions have been met, the remaining 17% are on schedule to be completed by their target dates) the federal agencies are moving forward with new activities in these areas to continue to improve our management and protection of ocean resources..