

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 10, 2004

U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy  
1120 20th Street, NW  
Suite 200 North  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Commissioners:

Our oceans are a public trust whose stewardship is critical to our economy, our environment, and our future. However, the health of this vital public resource is currently threatened. We, the undersigned members of Oregon's Congressional Delegation, look forward to the release of your final recommendations for a new comprehensive national oceans policy, and we hope that your report will identify the fundamental reforms needed to promote the long-term health and productivity of America's ocean ecosystems.

Ocean and coastal resources are vital to Oregon's heritage. With one public beach access site for about every half mile of coastline, 90 percent of the 362 miles of ocean coastline is open to the public for recreation.<sup>1</sup> Coastal resources also contribute greatly to the state's economy, with commercial fishing delivering over \$65 million to the state's economy in 2002.<sup>2</sup> These important marine resources must be managed sustainably.

Recent reports have identified a serious decline in the abundance of ocean fish and the health of marine ecosystems. A study in *Nature*, May 2003, revealed that the world's large predatory fish, including cod, halibut, tuna, swordfish and marlin, are down to 10 percent of their historical levels. The Pew Oceans Commission report, released in June 2003, found that our coastal and marine ecosystems are in a state of crisis as a result of mismanaged human activities ranging from overfishing to uncontrolled coastal development and pollution. The Pew report also offers logical recommendations, such as ecosystem-based management, to address the problems.

The decline in our nation's fisheries over the last several years is being felt along Oregon's coast, where nine species of West Coast ground fish populations are currently below 25 percent of their historical levels.<sup>3</sup> This has resulted in a significant groundfish closure. Some West Coast fish populations are as low as 7 percent of their historical

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.beach.com/stateofthebeach/6-state/state.asp?state=OR>.

<sup>2</sup> NMFS Annual Landing results, Oregon, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> From Table 3.2-3 of the Final EIS for the proposed Groundfish ABC and OY Specifications and Management Measures for the 2003 Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery. PFMC. January 2003

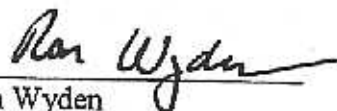
levels.<sup>4</sup> In order to regain healthy ocean ecosystems capable of supporting productive and sustainable fish populations, we must establish a comprehensive national ocean policy for protecting, maintaining and restoring our marine ecosystems.

Again, we look forward to the Commission's final recommendations to Congress. We sincerely hope that your recommendations will guide Congress in creating a new national ocean policy that restores and maintains the long-term health of our nation's oceans and coastal environments. The thousands of jobs and families supported by commercial fishing, our precious recreational opportunities, and our coastal communities – not to mention the extraordinary marine environments themselves – depend on decisive action that we must take now.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



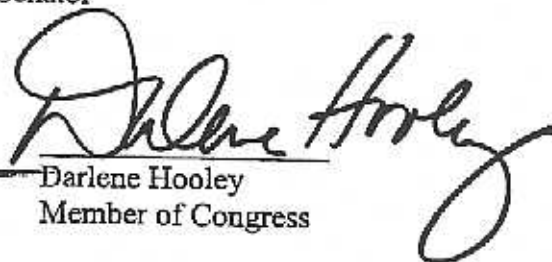
Ron Wyden  
U.S. Senator



Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress



David Wu  
Member of Congress



Darlene Hooley  
Member of Congress

cc. Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*