STATE OF GEORGIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
ATLANTA 30334-0900

Sonny Perdue
GOVERNOR

June 4, 2004

The Honorable James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
1120 20th Street, NW
Suite 200 North
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

The State of Georgia applauds the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy for your landmark Report on the state of our oceans. We commend the Commission's call to action to address the myriad of significant ocean policy challenges facing this nation. We endorse the overarching critical actions enumerated in the Report's Executive Summary, its broad findings, and many of the recommendations in the body of the Report. The guiding principles articulated in Chapter 3 are fundamental to meaningful implementation of the Commission's recommendations. Clearly, you have developed a much needed blueprint for an improved, coordinated, cross-cutting national ocean policy committed to protecting ecosystem, human, and economic health of our coasts and oceans, the foundation for which is sustainable use of ocean and estuarine resources.

Georgia is one of this nation's fastest growing states, ranking fifth in growth in the recent census. Not surprisingly, our coastal region is experiencing exponential growth, and the pressures on our coastal resource base continue to intensify. Home to the highest density of endangered and protected species in the state, one third of the remaining salt marsh of the East Coast, and the fifth busiest container port in the nation, Georgia's coast is environmentally and economically strategic. As such, it must be managed in a sustainable way. Yet, coastal Georgia's extraordinary growth presents a sustainable development challenge. With rapid coastal development pressures, we are witnessing dissolution of fishing communities and cultures and heritage. The most desired land is the most ecologically fragile. Maintaining the integrity of our coast's natural communities is one of our State's greatest challenges.

Georgia's coastal zone provides tremendous economic and societal benefits. Our ocean-based economy includes commercial fisheries impacts valued at $44 million, and saltwater sport fishing expenditures conservatively estimated at $300 million dollars. In fiscal year 2003, Georgia's deepwater ports accounted for $35.4 billion in sales (7% of Georgia's total sales); $17.1 billion in gross state product (6% of Georgia's total GSP); $10.8 billion in income (4% of Georgia's total personal income); 275,968 full- and part-time jobs (7% of Georgia's total employment); $3.2 billion in federal taxes; and $1.4 billion in state and local taxes. Coastal Glynn County, site of next month's G-8 Summit, hosted an estimated 1.1 million visitors in 2002. Domestic travelers contributed $239.4 million in direct expenditures, and generated more than $17.6 million in tax

revenues for state and local treasuries. The ability to ensure these benefits for current and future generations will depend on bold steps now to support sustainable development while conserving coastal and ocean ecosystems long recognized as vital areas of our state.

The USCOP Report's four guideposts for improved ocean policy-ecosystem-based management, science based decision-making; improved governance; and broad public education-support my goals for a New Georgia: a growing, educated, healthy, and safe Georgia. Just as my vision for a New Georgia is to be accomplished through redefining government, the Commission is proposing governance reform inclusive of federal agency reorganization, as well as programmatic reform. We applaud the call for an overarching National Ocean Council to provide much needed, top level policy coordination of coastal and ocean issues. The companion Regional Ocean Councils are a logical complement to bring together the collective resources and expertise to address significant state, local, and regional issues. We further endorse a substantially enhanced NOAA as lead to work with the other federal agencies and states in a broader conservation and management agenda. However, it is imperative that new governance structures encourage innovation at the regional and state level while avoiding additional bureaucracy.

As the site of the land/water interface, States are uniquely positioned to deliver effective coastal management. By our decentralized nature, the States are in many cases better suited and equipped to take on various management challenges. Coordinated state action is, in many cases, the most efficient and effective way of achieving our common national policy objectives. States have the authority and responsibility to deal with population growth, infrastructure, marine commerce, zoning, fishing, and all the major determinants of the quality of our marine environment. As such, we should have a leading role in the development and execution of ocean policies and programs, and the state-federal partnership should be a common thread across the Report's recommendations. There should be an emphasis on facilitation and support for implementing plans, strategies, and initiatives developed at the local, state, and regional level that are consistent with national goals.

The Report calls for strengthening coastal and ocean management and protection through a regional scale, ecosystem based management approach. Insomuch as water availability and its quality are among the most important environmental and economic development issues of the next decade in Georgia, there is a crucial need for integrating watershed management that reaches from the mountains to the sea and is capable of ecosystem scale solutions. Links between rivers, watersheds and estuaries is an increasing focus of research, education and outreach efforts in our state. A strong local-state-federal partnership is crucial to delineating these watershed-estuary relationships as well as to effective non-point source pollution controls, habitat conservation and restoration, natural hazards mitigation, communication and education, and expanded strategic scientific capacity.

Knowledge is the currency of future decision-making. As so eloquently stated in the Executive Summary, education is the key to an informed citizenry. We enthusiastically support the Commission's recommendations for education and for increased funding to support these important efforts. A strong national ocean policy can only be sustained through the development of a high-quality ocean education program that supports learning at all age levels and by all

disciplines. The Report's recommendations complement the educational efforts currently directed at all age groups within Georgia. An example is the use of the oceans as a unifying thematic base in education to demystify science, view global issues, and to stimulate math and science achievement.

As technology propels the workplace toward globalization in the 21st century, there is an increasing demand for students with creative and multi-disciplinary training that is both theoretical and practical, particularly in science and engineering. Yet, economic resources for educational innovation and academic research remain very limited. One successful approach is the development of partnerships across the historically separate worlds of academia, research, government, and industry. Savannah State University (SSU) and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography (SkIO) prepare well-trained students (many from underserved populations) for careers or further education while stimulating a lifelong interest in marine and environmental science.

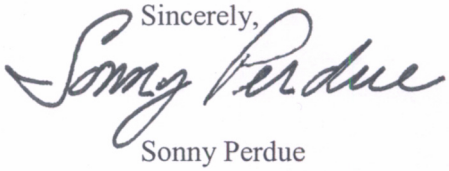
Throughout the country, the challenge of balancing resource conservation with resource use demands new and different kinds of data, more accurate, comprehensive, and timely information, and creative problem solving. Georgia is proud of the academic and scientific efforts currently underway in our state to understand coastal and oceanic processes. The State works diligently to ensure the information provided from these investigations is translated and used by our policy and management officials. A recent example of improved scientific exchange between scientists and decision-makers is the Georgia Coastal Research Council's leadership in addressing the widespread salt marsh dieback occurring on Georgia's coast in recent years. Funded by Georgia Sea Grant and Georgia DNR, the Council is uniquely positioned to promote the incorporation of best-available scientific information into State and local resource management. The Georgia Sea Grant Program offers a cost effective and efficient mechanism for accomplishing many of the critical Actions recommended by the Commission in applied research, education, and outreach through the marine science and oceanographic expertise of its major partners, The University of Georgia, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Savannah State University, in concert with its government and private sector partners.

The State of Georgia supports the Commission's call for the implementation of a national Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), linked to global efforts. Georgia and the Southeastern U.S. region have already initiated a regional OOS, the Southeast Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing System. With a strengthened research effort and a linked, national and international observing effort, the U.S. will be able to meet today's ocean and coastal information challenges of critical importance to Georgia's citizens, such as improved hurricane track prediction, resource management and maritime shipping safety and efficiency.

Funding needed to implement the Report is substantial, yet the long-term benefits clearly warrant the investment. Sustained and dedicated funding for this call to action is imperative and should be provided to address priority initiatives identified in the report for implementation at the regional, state, and local levels. The State wholeheartedly endorses new resources that augment, not supplant, the current fiscal support for ocean and coastal programs.

In closing, the State of Georgia commends the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy for this landmark Report, and we sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide comments. Appended to this letter is a Technical Memorandum prepared by representatives from the University System of Georgia, Georgia Sea Grant, and Executive Branch agencies detailing more extensive comments regarding the Report's findings and recommendations. Please be assured Georgia's academic, government, and private sector partners stand poised to do our part to ensure the long term economic viability and ecological well-being of this nation's oceans and our State's coastal zone.

Sincerely,



Sonny Perdue

Attachment (Technical Memorandum included below)

June 4, 2004

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

TO: U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

FROM: Governor Sonny Perdue

SUBJECT: Preliminary Report Comments

The Preliminary Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (hereinafter referred to as "Report") has been reviewed by an interagency team of Executive Branch and University System experts. The following agencies, institutions, and organizations contributed to the comments synthesized in this Technical Memorandum:

Georgia State Government
University System of Georgia
Georgia Department of Agriculture
Georgia Coastal Research Council
Georgia Emergency Management Agency
Georgia Sea Grant College Program
Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Savannah State University Coastal Resources Division
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, Environmental Protection Division
University of Georgia, Wildlife Resources Division
School of Marine Programs
Georgia Port Authority
Marine Extension Service
Georgia Department of Transportation

Other
Coastal Marine Educators Group

Questions regarding the following comments should be directed to Heidi Green, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Governor, 404-656-1776, Hgreen@gov.state.ga.us <mailto:Hgreen@gov.state.ga.us> Or Susan Shipman, Director, Coastal Resources Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 912-264-7218, susan_shipman@dnr.state.ga.us <mailto:susan_shipman@dnr.state.ga.us>

State of Georgia Comments on Preliminary Report

We generally concur with the findings of the Report and the critical actions summarized in the Executive Summary Table on pp xvi-xvii. Government plays a pivotal role in protecting the public trust interests of navigation, commerce, fishing, recreation, environmental protection, and preservation of aesthetic values and cultural heritage, and we commend the Commission for the Report's breadth of focus. Part I, Chapters 1-3 and the Primer on Ocean Jurisdiction present invaluable background and provide an excellent foundation for the subsequent Action Agenda presented in Parts II through IX, Chapters 4 through 30. Please note we have no comments regarding Chapters 21 and 29.

Part II
Blueprint for Change: A New National Ocean Policy Framework

Chapter 4: Enhancing Ocean Leadership and Coordination

Making Improvements at the National Level

P 48, Recommendation 4-1. The State of Georgia strongly supports establishment of a National Ocean Council. The Executive Order should direct the federal agencies to coordinate regionally to support state, local, and regional efforts.

National Ocean Council

PP 48-49, Recommendation 4-2. We support this recommendation and the macro-scale functions identified for the National Ocean Council. With regard to the ninth bullet regarding functions, we question the mechanics of a voluntary process for the creation of regional ocean councils. Will formation/participation be incentivized? We agree with the application of a precautionary approach as described in Chapter 3, to decision-making.

P 49, Recommendation 4-3. We strongly support the principle of ecosystem-based management and the movement of federal agencies toward this strategy. This approach conforms to that underway by some of the regional fishery management councils (e.g., South Atlantic Council), the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy through the state wildlife grants, and Georgia DNR's strategic planning efforts.

Assistant to the President

P 50, Recommendation 4-4. We recommend a clarification of the seventh bullet under this recommendation that the Assistant to the President should have a degree of budget oversight for federal agency funding priorities so as to elevate the emphasis of oceans within the Administration budget. It is important that agencies with statutory mandates have the resources to successfully address their core missions.

Committee on Ocean Resource Management; Ocean-related Advisory Councils or Commissions

PP 52-53, Recommendations 4-8 and 4-9. We agree with these recommendations, but would note that the proposed structure in Figure 4.2 is still a complicated, potentially labyrinthine structure. There is a need for less, not more bureaucracy.

Making Improvements at the Regional Level

PP 54-55, Recommendations 4-10 and 4-11. We strongly support the formation of Regional Ocean Councils inclusive of the broad base of state, local, and regional stakeholders. Issues of concern are most likely to have their genesis in the regions. In the absence of a statutory catalyst for their formation, we question whether voluntary regional ocean councils will materialize. The Regional Councils need the appropriate federal dedicated support infrastructure similar to that established for the regional fishery management councils. We agree that federal agencies with ocean and coastal related functions should enhance their regional coordination not only among themselves but also with state and local entities in the region. The states are the key drivers of issues, process, and solutions.

Chapter 5: Advancing a Regional Approach

General Comments:
We strongly endorse the concept of cross-cutting, ecosystem based regional coordination, and the formation of Regional Ocean Councils and Regional Ocean Information Programs. We reiterate our reservations regarding a voluntary approach and advocate for adequate resources to support the regional councils and associated research and information. We recommend a clearer statement on the purposes of the Regional Councils.

Research

P 60. We would submit that future ecosystem management will depend on ecosystem models and adequate continuing monitoring programs and be organized regionally into Large Marine Ecosystems (LME). The academic and resource management community in our Southeast U. S. LME has made substantial progress in developing collaborative programs that will create the scientific basis for ecosystem management. MARMAP and SEA COOS are two excellent examples of the regional approach to ecosystem science.

Outreach and Education for Decision Makers

P 60. We agree with the Report's findings regarding Sea Grant's capabilities to perform outreach and education for decision makers. An example is the Georgia Coastal Research Council (GCRC). Modeled after the National Research Council and funded in part by Georgia Sea Grant, the GCRC provides mechanisms for practical, working relationships between coastal researchers and managers in the State of Georgia. The Council works towards this goal by holding regular meetings with state natural resource managers to discuss their scientific needs, maintaining a web page as a clearinghouse for information on research activities (http://www.marsci.uga.edu/coastalcouncil), synthesizing information in technical reports, and coordinating research efforts on emerging coastal resource issues. The GCRC has organized scientific workshops and public information meetings, written white papers, and established a scientific monitoring program to address the widespread dieback of salt marsh grass that occurring along the Georgia coast over the past several years. This type of function is invaluable for improving scientific exchange between coastal scientists and decision makers and promoting the incorporation of best-available scientific information into State and local resource management.

Regional Ecosystem Assessments

P 61, Recommendation 5-3. The concept of having regional ocean information programs to coordinate the development of a regional ecosystem assessment necessitates federal involvement because the area of interest exceeds that of any other governmental body. To be effective, federal involvement needs to include management, with adequate funding, and predetermined goals and design. That said, the turn around of assessment information needs to be enhanced above where it is now (e.g., EPA's National Coastal Assessment).

Administration of the Regional Ocean Information Programs

P 62, Recommendation 5-5. We agree with the recommendation and the role of Sea Grant in the regional ocean information programs. The recommendation calls for Congress to establish regional boards to administer regional ocean information programs, with a grants process to carry out program priorities. To ensure success of this effort, there will need to be a mechanism to garner Congressional support for the regional boards and regional ocean information programs. The dollars available to conduct the ocean information programs need to be provided based on goals, objectives, and action items, and not on political considerations.

Chapter 6: Coordinating Management in Federal Waters

General Comments:
The current fragmented nature of ocean use governance doesn't work, as is well-demonstrated with the offshore aquaculture example. The National Ocean Policy Framework offers an viable alternative to the current situation.

Clarifying Offshore Responsibilities

P 64, Recommendation 6-1. We support the recommendation but suggest it be amended to clarify state public trust and economic interests in the EEZ. We further recommend that NOAA be established as the lead agency to work with the other federal agencies and states in coordinating management, research, assessment, and monitoring of current and future uses of federal waters (Ref. Recommendation 7-1). New governance structures should avoid additional bureaucracy and encourage innovation at the regional and state level. Any offshore management regime derived should include consultation with the states, including federal consistency review.

A Fair Return for the Use of Offshore Resources

P 66, Recommendation 6-2. We support the concept of applying "resource rent" to the extractive use of fisheries resources.

The Role of Marine Protected Areas

On page 67 the last sentence of the second paragraph under Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), should be modified to say, "Monitoring, periodic assessment, and modification are also essential to ensure the continuing effectiveness of marine protected areas, and to demonstrate accountability to affected stakeholders".

P 68, Recommendation 6-3. We recommend the addition of the word "evaluation" to strengthen 6-3, to read "...uniform process for the effective design, implementation, and evaluation of marine protected areas".

Regional and Local Stakeholders

P 69, Recommendation 6-4 should be revised, "... and lead the design, implementation, and evaluation of marine protected areas". These additions would help to alleviate the concerns of those who believe MPAs will be established and no one will do the necessary follow-up to see if they are meeting the goals. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) has heard this repeatedly in the context of the Oculina Bank. The success of MPA efforts depends on an engaged and active local constituency that supports MPAs (i.e., a bottom up effort) rather than efforts led by entities external to the region.

Chapter 7: Strengthening the Federal Agency Structure

General Comments:
Overall, we agree with the findings of this Chapter and strongly support Recommendations 7-1 through 7-5. We strongly support reorganization and consolidation. With regard to federal agency reform, the Homeland Security Agency experience indicates that political inertia can be overcome to consolidate federal agencies. Consolidation is needed to accomplish the cross-cutting needed to achieve ecosystem management. We recommend as abbreviated a timeline as possible to achieve the three phases of federal ocean management reorganization described on page 73. It is unclear what is meant by long-term. The long-term phase makes the ultimately unified federal agency structure more costly and lessens the likelihood of success.

Strengthening NOAA: Phase I

P 75, Recommendation 7-2 should be revised. The President should instruct the OMB to review the total ocean and coastal budget, across all federal agencies to better enable identification of multi-agency commitments and cross-cutting programs.

Managing All Natural Resources In An Ecosystem Based Management Approach: Phase III

P 78. Ecosystem-based management is a laudable goal and is the direction that we should be moving toward. Increased coastal and ocean policy coordination centered around effective implementation of the ecosystem-based management goal will benefit from state-federal partnerships reflecting shared public trust and economic interests. Yet, while we should be moving to ecosystem-based management, our understanding of coastal and ocean processes and watershed inputs to the ocean is inadequate to provide the sound scientific basis for ecosystem management. We must develop a basic understanding of the living and non-living processes and their interactions; integrate those processes through ecosystem models; and invest in comprehensive long term modeling. Understanding these basic processes has been the focus of Georgia Sea Grant (http://www.gasg.org) research conducted by scientists of The University of Georgia School of Marine Programs and Marine Institute, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Models allow a representation of the basic ecological processes in formats that create comprehendible visual presentations and are tools for predictive approximation of alternative management decisions. Georgia Sea Grant scientists are developing ecosystem models of several rivers and estuaries that incorporate physical and water quality models. The regional Southeast Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observation Systems (SEA COOS) also is developing oceanographic models that will encompass the South Atlantic Bight. Regarding long term monitoring, the Department of Natural Resources monitoring programs, including Multiscale Advanced Raster Map Analysis for Sustainable Environment and Development

(MARMAP), and the emerging SEA COOS regional observation network are essential data sources for creating effective ecosystem management.

Part III
Ocean Stewardship: The Importance of Education and Ocean Awareness

Chapter 8: Promoting Lifelong Ocean Education

General Comments:
That oceans are important to us as a nation is a matter of fact. How important they are to us, individually as citizens, is fundamentally a question of how well educated that citizenry is. The report boldly proposes to prepare a new generation of ocean leaders who will improve decision makers' understanding of the ocean and cultivate a broad public stewardship ethic. While many of the types of programs described in the Report exist, clearly there is a need to both strengthen and coordinate those programs, and the State of Georgia enthusiastically supports the Commission's recommendations for education and for increased funding to support these important efforts.

A strong national ocean policy can only be sustained through the development of a high-quality ocean education program that supports learning at all age levels and by all disciplines. Through such efforts we will be able to engage the entire nation in a science education process that uses the oceans to highlight the relevance and utility of science to everyday life, and the U.S. will be able to supply the diverse workforce that will be needed in coming decades, equipped and able to make informed decisions about the critical issues that we face. A greater understanding of the oceans and coastal ecosystems will instill in our populace a sense of stewardship for these important environments. Enhanced and improved instructional efforts should cut across all the traditional educational disciplines and should help to educate all citizens as to the value of the oceans and how the actions of individuals and communities affect marine environments. The recommendations contained within the Report will complement well the educational efforts to all age groups currently underway within the state of Georgia.

The recommendation to develop a national ocean education office responsible for leading this effort is a sound one, and one that will enhance current efforts underway in Georgia and around the nation. Of particular importance will be the strengthening of both the COSEE efforts and efforts aimed at increasing the participation of underrepresented populations in ocean activities. As technology propels the workplace toward globalization in the 21st century, there is an increasing demand for students with creative and multi-disciplinary training that is both theoretical and practical, particularly in science and engineering. Yet, economic resources for educational innovation and academic research remain very limited. One successful approach has been the development of partnerships across the historically separate worlds of academia, research, government, and industry.

The proposed structure for coordination of education programs and recommendations for action should help to better focus attention on coastal issues and bring needed resources for assessment, monitoring, and improvement of coastal environments, and improved understanding of the importance of these matters to the general citizenry. Georgia looks forward to providing leadership and participating as a partner in the development of a collaborative national ocean education network to achieve these goals.

A National Ocean Education Office

P 87, Recommendation 8-1. We support the creation of a national ocean education office. We recommend that the Ocean.ED vision and strategies be developed with State and local input.

The National Sea Grant College Program

PP 90-91. The National Sea Grant College Program and its academic, government and private sector partners offer a cost effective and efficient mechanism for accomplishing many of the Critical Actions recommended by the Commission on Ocean Policy in research, education and outreach. Sea Grant can play an important role in six of the 12 critical actions recommended by the Commission (p. xvii): Double the nation's investment in ocean research; Implement the national Integrated Ocean Observing System; Increase attention to ocean education through coordinated and effective formal and informal programs; Strengthen the link between coastal and watershed management; and Create measurable water pollution reduction goals, particularly for nonpoint sources, and strengthen incentives, technical assistance and other management tools to reach those goals. Georgia Sea Grant can be the vehicle to implement the Commission recommendations, but it cannot be done without the marine science and oceanographic expertise of the major partners, The University of Georgia, Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, the Georgia Institute of Technology and Savannah State University, and other participating institutions (Middle Georgia College and State University, Georgia Southern University and Clarke Atlanta University). In order to expand Sea Grant's role in research, education and outreach, expanded federal support and eventually state support will be needed.

With regard to the discussion of linking COSEE and Sea Grant, the Southeast COSEE is an integral part of the region's Sea Grant Programs (GA, SC, & NC). The Center Director is located with SC Sea Grant in Charleston, but a regional educator position is funded by COSEE/Sea Grant and the UGA Marine Extension Service in Savannah.

Using Ocean Based Examples to Meet Education Standards

P 93, Recommendation 8-6. Clarification is needed as to how Ocean.ED will build state and local capacities for informal education and outreach. The federal agencies should fund and support state and community-based education efforts. To the degree possible, the national vision should encompass state standards and the implementation strategy should contain clear goals, priorities, and milestones. Also, the recommendation should include working with university extension service and Sea Grant programs. Of particular importance is the UGA Marine Extension Service, its personnel and facilities which serve as the primary K-12 education and outreach arms of Georgia Sea Grant.

Engaging Underrepresented and Underserved Groups

P 96, Recommendation 8-8. We support the recommendation and suggest the identification of the Sea Grant program as a partner in this initiative. Georgia, a coastal state whose coastal resources and impacts will play an increasingly important role for the rest of the state and nation, is positioning itself for major contributions in this regard in some unique ways. Georgia Sea Grant funds a marine educator position and three marine education internships with the UGA Marine Extension Service and ship time for the R/V SAVANNAH for undergraduate and graduate educational programs at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. Breadth of public involvement and stewardship in the future can only be achieved if it is integral in our education system and includes the fastest growing demographic groups (in Georgia, African Americans and

Hispanic Americans) who are currently among the least represented in ocean affairs. Doing so in schools that enroll a significant percent of students from underrepresented groups, will build strong cultural bridges that will capitalize upon these diverse strengths, ensuring the flow of intellectual talent and energy into ocean-related fields.

Expanding Graduate Educational Opportunities

P 99, Recommendation 8-10. There is a need to prepare students for a broad range of careers in academia, government and industry, which is worth emphasizing. More (and better) programs are needed that produce trained professionals able to work to promote science-based decision making (particularly in applied science). In addition, cross-training in science and policy would allow more effective dialogue between scientists and managers, and would serve to improve the qualifications of the "ocean workforce."

Specific Federal Responsibilities

P 101, Recommendation 8-12. We support this recommendation. Great ideas and our future workforce will come from these repositories of untapped intellectual energy only if, as the report says, there are efforts '...to provide diverse educational opportunities at the undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral levels in a range of marine-related fields.' Georgia has some successful models of what works from within our ocean science and education communities, involving partnerships across the historically separate worlds of academia, research, government, and industry.

Part IV
Living on the Edge: Economic Growth and Conservation Along the Coast

Chapter 9: Managing Coasts and Their Watersheds

Implications of Growth

P 108, 2nd paragraph, last sentence. Add "beach and" to sentence, to read "....results in ever-increasing beach and wetlands losses."

P 108, 3rd paragraph, last sentence. "If current coastal growth trends continue, many healthy watersheds will cross the 10 percent threshold...." It is recommended that the word "healthy" be deleted because one should not assume that any watershed having less than 10 percent impervious surfaces is healthy. While usually the case, it would not be always the case. We suggest "If current coastal growth trends continue, many more watersheds will cross the 10 percent threshold....".

Multi-layered Decision Making

P 108, last paragraph. This paragraph is written with the assumption that all local governments have planning, zoning, and subdivision controls. That is not the case, and where there is none, the mechanisms for change are lacking or severely handicapped.

Coastal Zone Management Program

P 110, 4th full paragraph, second sentence. "A large portion of federal funding should be linked to program performance ...". While it is agreed that a portion of the federal funding should be linked to performance, it should not be a large portion or even the majority. These programs work hard to meet Federal and their own objectives. However, the program and its authorities, and political climate that may exist, will not allow progress in all states at the same rate. A base level of funding needs to be maintained for States to work toward meeting programmatic goals. Removal of a "large" portion of the funding will further lessen the ability of a state to meet program goals.

P 111, Recommendation 9-1. We strongly support the recommendation that Congress reauthorize the CZMA. The reauthorized CZMA needs to retain a strong emphasis on partnerships, the state role in working with communities, and the need to maintain states' flexibility to implement programs that meet federal goals in ways that best fit each state's ecological, geographical, and political landscape. With regard to the referenced resource assessments, states will only be able to deliver these assessments if adequate federal funding additional to the CZMA base funding (i.e.,
306/306A/309) is available.
We have several comments regarding the proposed CZMA amendments:

Goals discussion. Because the CZM Program is a Federal- State partnership, add the mention of "state goals" to the discussion of measurable goals based on coastal resource assessments that are consistent with national and regional goals.

Evaluations discussion. Not only should a state's
evaluation criteria be reviewed in a NOAA evaluation of a State's CZM Program, the State criteria should be used in that evaluation.

Incentives discussion. We do not favor this disincentive of cutting a substantial portion of the funding each state receives based on performance. As discussed above, a significant level of base funding must be assured to keep Programs engaged and dealing with issues. Additional funding bonuses should be awarded to states for performance above a base level.

Boundaries discussion. Define and limit the watershed.
Many watersheds would encompass nearly all of a state, an area that would be politically inappropriate for a state to handle through CZM. Trying to encompass entire watersheds could spread CZM efforts too thin, so as to be ineffective. States have a legitimate concern about potentially stretching base funds over wider geographic regions. If the state boundary requirements are expanded, base program funds should be expanded to deal with the corresponding increase in size of program service area.

Other Relevant Federal Programs

P 113, Recommendation 9-3. To the end of the recommendation should be added ".... and to develop mitigation programs to address existing inappropriate
growth". This addition serves to acknowledge and support the need to
address problems already existing.

Linking Coastal and Watershed Management

P 114. A spring 2004 survey of Georgia Sea Grant constituents further validates the Report's findings of a growing interest in watershed management. Top among the four highest priorities identified were the issues of describing how land-based activities (agricultural, industrial, residential, and recreational) affect the interaction of water, pollutants, and nutrients in the coastal watersheds; educating a changing and diverse populace about coastal resource issues (e.g. non-point-source pollution, impact of growth on coastal resources); providing long-range planning tools for coastal development (e.g. create Best Management Practices, explore waterfront zoning options); and investigating the link between water quality/quantity and fisheries health.

P 115, CZMA Federal Consistency. The definition, in general terms given in paragraph 3, is misleading. Federal consistency is much more than a limited waiver of federal authority in the area of offshore waters seaward of state submerged lands. The explanation should be expanded.

Chapter 10, Guarding People and Property Against Natural Hazards.

General Comments
As identified in the chapter, the increasing conflict between human and environmental interface provides the foundation for the levels of hazardousness, increasing levels of risk, and overall vulnerability. This interface creates the exposure of both people and property to natural hazards, and which will continue to cause very real problems for both emergency management and our coastal areas. As long as there are people, they will continue to want access to the ocean and the ability to have access to work, live and recreate in these fragile environments.

This Chapter contains several good and well-reasoned positions. The focus is primarily on Federal laws and regulations that help to shape the human and environmental interface. Overall, the discussion is too brief, and lacks adequate details.

Improving Federal Management of Hazards In Coastal Areas

P 118. 2nd paragraph. The statement that "The Coastal Barrier Resources Act (COBRA) administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Chapter 9) also has significant influence on natural hazards management." would be better supported with expanded text in this chapter. COBRA has more influence on construction controls and development, than on natural hazards management. We recommend definitions at the outset of the chapter to clarify confusing text. For example, what is "natural hazards management"? If there are limits and controls on human growth and development on the coast or coastal floodplains, those measures limit the level of exposure to a hazard event, but do not serve to manage the hazard.

Changing Inappropriate Federal Incentives; Improved Understanding; National Flood Insurance Program; Hazards Mitigation Planning

PP 120-123, Recommendations 10-1 through 10-4. Although a couple of these recommendations issue a call to action for potential agencies in terms of roles and responsibilities, we recommend a stronger emphasis on real action and real responsibility, and more emphasis on definable milestones that concretely address some of the issues identified in this chapter.

National Flood Insurance Program

PP 121-123. It is clear through the research literature, General Accounting Office reports, Federal Emergency Management Agency documentation and the positions stated in this chapter that there are some real problems with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). That being said, the recommendations for the NFIP changes are very general. The overhaul of the NFIP program under the National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 1994 is not discussed, nor the overall effectiveness of the changes over the past decade. We refer the Commission to five additional excellent sources on this topic:

* http://www.colorado.edu/hazards/
* Natural Hazards and Disaster Series published by Joseph Henry Press, some of the titles include
  * " Disasters by Design: A reassessment of natural hazards in the United States" Edited by Dennis Mileti,
  * "American Hazardscapes: The regionalization of hazards and disasters" Edited by Susan Cutter,
  * "Paying the Price: The status and role of Insurance against natural disasters in the United States" Edited by Howard Kunreuther and Richard Roth; and,
  * "Cooperating with Nature: Confronting natural hazards with land-use planning for sustainable communities" Edited by Raymond Burby.

Chapter 11: Conserving and Restoring Coastal Habitat

Funding for Habitat Conservation

P 127, Recommendation 11-1. The State of Georgia strongly supports this call for a dedicated program for coastal and estuarine land conservation. This would be best implemented through a permanent authorization, with initial funding at a minimum level of $60 million annually. While we support awarding a portion of the funds competitively according to approved priority plans, there should be a regional balance, and base funding should be established for all states with approved plans. Such a funding source would be a priority complement to the Georgia Governor's Land Conservation Partnership Program, a program that engages non-governmental and private sector partners in land conservation. The CZMA amendments should allow states the flexibility to work with non-profit conservation organizations and with less than fee simple ownership arrangements, such as conservation easements.

Enhancing Information and Understanding

P 131, Recommendation 11-3. We support this recommendation; however, supplemental funding will be needed to accomplish the desired monitoring, assessment, research and education.

Chapter 12: Managing Sediments and Shorelines

General Comments:
An additional consideration is recommended for inclusion in Chapter 12. Consistent analytical standards should be developed for sediment test results associated with dredging projects. There

does not seem to be a fair, consistent standard for reviewing sediment test results. For example, in the Savannah Harbor, different resource agencies use different lists to determine the environmental acceptability of sediments. Even within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Charleston Office uses different standards than the Brunswick Office. Research into the idea of taking ambient sediment samples and comparing the ratios of found elements (heavy metals) with the aluminum content of the sample and comparing those ratios with the subject samples should be explored for acceptability.

Developing Regional Strategies for Sediment Management

P 139. A companion recommendation is needed to review and amend existing legal authorities to enable the national strategy for managing sediments stated in Recommendation 12-1, to be implemented on a regional basis. While the US Army Corps of Engineers may wish to operate under this concept, they are, for the most part, unable to implement the concept because their authorities are too confining and restrictive, and limit coordination.

Beach Nourishment: A Special Use of Sediments

P 141. Even though today there is a difference of opinion over this issue, government at all levels will soon have to grapple with how to mitigate the high levels of risk created by the consumer choice and economic benefits of beachside living. Beachside development will not retreat, except under very infrequent circumstances, and is not a practical alternative. Seaward extension of the beach, in conjunction with a hold the line posture by governmental decision-making bodies, will be the only means to lessen the impact of hazards on beachside development. A factual, objective, cost-benefit analysis considerate of all environmental and economic elements will be needed, as is discussed in Recommendation 12-2.

Techniques of Cost-Benefit Analysis

P 141, Recommendation 2-2. The State of Georgia wholeheartedly supports this recommendation. It speaks to our long-standing call for the Corps to incorporate environmental benefits (e.g. the benefits of beach nourishment to sea turtle nesting) into their requisite cost-benefit analysis for proposed dredge spoil disposal options.

National and Regional Dredging Teams

P 141. In the last line on this page, the Report lists several ports that have developed long-term plans for managing dredged materials, but Savannah is not listed. The Savannah District, USACE, has a long range plan in place called the "Long Term Management Strategy" or LTMS.

Chapter 13: Supporting Marine Commerce and Transportation

General Comments:
The State of Georgia finds that the Report fairly assesses the condition and management of the nation's marine transportation system (MTS), accurately accounts for and acknowledges the critical importance of the MTS, and develops sensible and constructive recommendations for improving the condition and management of the MTS.

Part V
Clear Waters Ahead: Coastal and Ocean Water Quality

Chapter 14: Addressing Coastal Water Pollution

General Comments:
Many of the major problems in the coastal zone are caused by things taking place well away from the coast. To correct them, more emphasis needs to be placed on managing all those factors that contribute to the quality (and quantity) of the water (and the dissolved or suspended material it transports) entering the coastal zone. Solutions exist absent new research efforts, and include enforcement of existing water quality and erosion and sedimentation regulations, elevating growth management in inland counties as a priority for the coastal states, and educating those who do not live on the coast that their actions affect the coastal zone. Despite the tremendous recent growth of the coastal zone population, the industries, agriculture, and urban sprawl and population centers located up watershed can have a profound effect on estuarine water quality.

Wastewater Treatment Plants

P 159, Recommendation 14-1. Pharmaceutical needs to be added to the list of pollutants in wastewater. The last line of recommendation should be revised to read "Additionally, EPA should support a vigorous effort to characterize the extent of the impact of pharmaceuticals, household, and industrial chemicals in wastewater."

Septic Systems

P 160. The discussion of Septic Systems is more appropriately placed in the nonpoint source section. Overall, the discussion of septic systems is deficient in failing to recognize the problem of ageing septic systems in coastal areas, many of which malfunction. A companion recommendation to 14-2 is needed to address the issue of failing septic systems.

P 160, Recommendation 14-2. The USEPA and states should increase technical and financial assistance to help communities with those elements mentioned. Enforcement needs to be added to the list of elements. Also, this recommendation needs to specify that performance standards should be established. Performance standards will preclude poorly sited systems and encourage maintenance, two frequent problems with septic systems today.

Animal Feeding Operations

P 161, Recommendation 14-3. It is recommended that the following be added as the second sentence to this recommendation. "EPA should support a vigorous effort to characterize the extent of the impact of pharmaceutical and other wastes from Animal Feeding Operations wastewater. Additionally, ..."

Coastal Zone Management Act

P 164. We are in agreement that the modest level of federal funding through CZMA has been insufficient for states to prepare and implement their 6217 coastal nonpoint source management plans. However, another problem that looms just as large as lack of funding is the lack of organizational support and backing by all Federal sponsors and partners. Rather than being

engaged to see that the Federally mandated program is progressing in the states, the Federal agencies have been distant in terms of supporting, buying into, and evaluating the State's efforts. The lack of Federal support has significantly slowed the State's ability to progress.

Improving the Control of Nonpoint Sources

P167-170, Recommendations 14-8, 14-9, 14-11, and 14-12. We support these recommendations but emphasize that local decision-making is the key to address the cumulative impacts of development on water quality.

Authorizing Federal Agencies to Impose Disincentives

P 169. 2nd Paragraph. Not all states have fully approved coastal nonpoint source pollution control program pursuant to CZARA Section 6217. Because we only entered the CZM program in 1998, the State of Georgia is in the program development stage and continues to need support. This discussion seems to be based on the belief that all programs have been submitted for final approval and implementation. In light of an overall lack of Federal support (see comment above), support should not be taken away for program development. Were that to occur, obtaining full program approval would go from extremely difficult to the impossible.

P 169, Recommendation 14-10. The recommendation should instead include the authority to provide incentives. Disincentives for nonpoint source programs are inappropriate because it is a relatively new management arena and there are yet too many questions. For instance, there is a lack of scientific credibility of a few key water quality standards. Disincentives will do little to improve water quality in the United States.

Thinking About Land Use

P 170, 1st full paragraph. This discussion of NEMO should include mention of the myriad of state and local governments and organizations who participate and have been instrumental in furthering the work and successes of NEMO. The University of Georgia through programs sponsored by Sea Grant, Space Grant and Land Grant Programs is conducting statewide programs that address this Critical Action. The Non-point-source Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO), also known in Georgia as NELO (Local Officials), and the EPA Smart Growth Program are providing the outreach programs for local decision makers who must address the daily planning decisions

P 170, Recommendation 14-11. This discussion needs to reflect the fact that some states and local governments do not have codes and ordinances to require land use planning and decision-making. Therefore "State and local governments should enact and/or revise their codes and ordinances .... Thus codes and ordinances should consider the individual and cumulative impacts of development on water quality...."

Collaboration at the Watershed Scale

P 171, 2nd Paragraph. In addition to the limited financial resources, institutional stability, and lack of technical expertise that hampers traditional water pollution control strategies, another of significant importance is that watersheds cross political boundaries and there are not equivalent authorities and programs throughout the watershed.

Chapter 15: Creating a National Water Quality Monitoring Network

Federal Programs

P 176, last paragraph. In this discussion regarding EPA's EMAP, the Report states that the program design is not well suited for trend analysis. We would submit it is well suited to trend analysis to the extent that trends are characterized for geographic areas, not individual sites. Trend analysis of a fixed site applies only to that one point.

Chapter 16: Limiting Vessel Pollution and Improving Vessel Safety

Waste Pumpout Facilities

P 190, Recommendation 16-8. This recommendation should be expanded to advocate that states and local governments should require pump outs as a marina permit condition.

Chapter 17: Preventing the Spread of Invasive Species

General Comments:
Unintentional introductions can be limited considerably by taking precautions with, for example ballast water. Intentional or semi-intentional introductions can only be curtailed through education, and possibly strict enforcement. The current spread of the green mussel in Georgia is a good example of probably a careless discard by a shellfish wholesaler or a restaurant or fish store or a consumer throwing out old (but not yet dead) product into tidal waters.

Chapter 18: Reducing Marine Debris

Working with Communities

P 215. Communities should undertake a campaign with the fast food industry to launch a litter abatement program.

P 217, Recommendation 18-5. A review should be undertaken of US Special Areas designation to determine if designation of additional ocean/coastal areas is warranted.

Part VI
Ocean Value and Vitality: Enhancing the Use and protection of Ocean Resources

Chapter 19: Achieving Sustainable Fisheries

The Value of Science for Wise Management

P 222, Recommendation 19-1. Reliance on SSC advice is practiced by the regional fishery management councils more than the recommendation suggests. Nonetheless, we support this

recommendation, with a suggestion that the requirement for managers to use scientific advice should be proportional to the status of a stock. The higher (healthier) the stock abundance, the more flexibility managers should have.

We also support the compensation component of the recommendation. However, compensation won't alleviate the situation that many state natural resource agencies are facing with regard to losing staff scientific positions, who are the individuals likely to be tapped to serve as SSC members. We recommend modifying this recommendation to say, "...and receive compensation commensurate with the increased duties and expectations". Also, in the third bullet under this recommendation, the language should give an example of "a credible, scientific organization" (e.g., AFS, NSF ?).

Separating Science and Management Decisions

P 222, Recommendation 19-2. While agreeing with this recommendation, implementation will mean considerable more time and work commitment by SSC members than is currently expected. This may cause difficulties for the smaller state agencies who may have few staff with the analytical qualifications. State agency SSC members are already fully committed trying to cover duties and expectations associated with the priorities of their agency.

Recommendation 19-3. We agree with this recommendation and note that this is already being practiced by the federal fishery management council.

The Need for Independent Review

P 223, Recommendation 19-4. While we agree with this recommendation, we note this is in the process of being done (e.g., the SEDAR process in place in the NMFS Southeast Region).

Using Default Measures to Ensure Progress

P 224, Recommendation 19-5. We agree with this recommendation; however, it is imperative that NMFS act in a timely manner pursuant to a suspense date if the default is enacted.

P 225, Recommendation 19-6. We partially disagree with this recommendation. If the stock is declared overfished, all fishing should be suspended until a fishery management plan for that stock is completed. Fishing at a reduced level should be allowed on a non-overfished stock while the plan is being developed and reviewed. Suspending all fishing can cause tremendous market disruptions.

RFMC Input on Research Priorities

P 225, Recommendation 19-7. We support this recommendation, which is already being executed by some regional fishery management councils (e.g., SAFMC) through their annual work plans, which are developed, presented, and negotiated with the NMFS regional office. Unfortunately, limited resources enable only a fraction of the information needs to be addressed in any annual period. A substantial boost in fiscal support to the NMFS regions and science centers is needed to fulfill this recommendation.

Data Needs for Recreational Fisheries

P 226, 2nd paragraph. We disagree with the suggestion of managing recreational fisheries by quota. This was tried unsuccessfully with king mackerel in the South Atlantic region in the 1980's. Fiscal resources needed for such in-season tracking would be better expended elsewhere, and conservative bag limits imposed so as to prevent over-harvest by the recreational sector.

P 226, Recommendation 19-8. We agree that more effort should be focused on collection of data from the marine recreational fishery; however, simply licensing saltwater anglers will not fix the data deficiencies. A coordinated evaluation of existing state saltwater licensing programs should be conducted to identify successful elements and to determine how best to license anglers so as to facilitate data collection and avoid creating a licensing system that is redundant, cumbersome at point of sale, administratively unwieldy, and politically unpalatable. We recommend inserting the following language into the recommendation after the first sentence, "Existing state saltwater angler licensing programs should be evaluated to determine which methods best facilitate the collection of data."

The Value of Cooperative Research

P 227, Recommendation 19-9. We enthusiastically support this recommendation. Failure to engage fishermen in cooperative research and surveys will perpetuate the current situation where managers lack timely and relevant information. We recommend modifying the second sentence, "NOAA should implement a process of external evaluation and ranking of all cooperative proposals by stakeholders to ensure..." so as to clearly communicate that all stakeholders would have a say in funding priorities.

Clarifying Fishery Management Authority and Jurisdiction

P 229-230, Recommendation 19-10. We generally agree with this recommendation. The Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act has compelled more effective conservation and management of shared coastal fisheries stocks among the 15 East Coast States. We disagree with requiring the application of the Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards to the interstate fishery management process. The standards and procedures of the ASMFC's Interstate Fishery Management Program Charter are modeled after the Magnuson -Stevens Act standards. These standards recognize the political reality that the states have a sovereign interest and right to manage the marine areas adjacent to the their coasts. They provides the Commission the flexibility to accommodate regional needs while successfully accomplishing broader conservation and restoration goals. National standards are appropriate for the Exclusive Economic Zone, since individual state interests merge into a greater coast-wide and national interest in the offshore region. This recommendation should be modified to state that "All interstate fishery management plans should be guided by the national standards in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and management Act...."

Clarifying Lead Authorities for Joint Planning Purposes

P 230, Recommendation 19-11. This recommendation proposes a degree of fisheries micro-management that we do not believe is appropriate for Congress. Questions regarding management authority and responsibility for individual fish species are inherently

regional issues. These are best left to be resolved by the existing regional fishery management councils and the Commission where local interests can be considered, rather than by a national level body, i.e., the Congress. A more appropriate role for Congress would be to establish national guidelines to ensure the lead management entity for each stock is clearly identified. The guidelines should include standards for coordination between the lead entity and other affected agencies.

We further question the use of proportion of catch as the primary determinant of the lead agency. Stock identity as defined by genetics, migration, historic vs. present range of occurrence and other population attributes should be factored into the decision. Provisions should be made for shift in "lead" agency/jurisdiction, if changing circumstances warrant. With regard to the second bullet under this recommendation, a RFMC should be designated "true" lead, as versus "administrative" lead.

Broadening Council Membership

P231, Recommendations 19-12 and 19-13. We support these recommendations. The Magnuson-Stevens Act should retain an eligibility requirement that RFMC nominees possess some marine or coastal knowledge.

Dedicated Access Privileges

P 235, Recommendation 19-15. We agree with this recommendation. The "dedicated access privilege" concept is fundamental to addressing overcaptilization, overfishing, and excessive litigation. Dedicated access privilege programs must be developed in concert with the states for transboundary fisheries, in order to be successful.

Reducing Overcapitalization of Fishing Fleets

General Comment: An increasing and acute problem that is not addressed in this discussion is the problem of the aging and largely un-insured southeast shrimp trawler fleet. Regulatory costs and depressed market prices due to imports have diminished the profitability of the fishery such that federally documented vessels are being abandoned on state water bottoms. There is little assistance to the States from the federal agencies to deal with this problem.

P 236, Recommendation 19-16. Implementation of this recommendation is a requisite for the "dedicated access privilege" concept to succeed.

Cooperative Enforcement Programs

P 238, Recommendation 19-17. While we agree that the USCG should remain a player in federal fisheries enforcement, the USCG mission was irrevocably changed once incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security. The USCG will logically continue to bear the responsibility for high seas fisheries enforcement and will have some involvement in littoral zone depending on the region; however, the future of federal fisheries enforcement in the littoral zone is JEAs with state natural resource agencies.

Consistent and adequate funding for equipment, operational costs, and training will be necessary to ensure that JEAs really work and aren't just "paper" agreements.

Fisheries reform requires strong enforcement in the face of pressure from both commercial and recreational fishermen. The focus of JEAs should shift from just high profile commercial cases to include recreational fishing cases. We will continue to see growth in marine recreational angling, and it is important to demonstrate that violations of recreational regulations will be treated just as seriously as commercial violations.

Cooperative Federal Enforcement

P 238, Recommendation 19-18. We suggest expanding this recommendation to include participation by state law enforcement officers to capitalize on their valuable local knowledge and expertise. Additionally, the Gulf and Atlantic interstate marine fisheries commissions have active law enforcement committees which are effective forums for this recommended coordination. These committees incorporate the federal agencies as members.

Vessel Monitoring System; Integrating VMS into a Data Collection and Dissemination System

P 240, Recommendations 19-19 and 19-20. We support these recommendations. Everyone fishing in a permitted fishery should be required to use VMS, largely for safety reasons.

Linking Fisheries Management with Other Regional Concerns

P 241. The second paragraph of this section should acknowledge the initial efforts being made toward ecosystem management. Specifically, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission fishery management plan for horseshoe crabs has an ecosystem focus. Moreover the interstate plan for menhaden recognizes the forage role as an important conservation objective.

Essential Fish Habitat

P 243. A missing component of the essential fish habitat action plan is outreach and coordination with the development community, local zoning and permitting authorities, and state and local elected officials, etc. to inform and educate about the impacts of development practices on essential fish habitat.

P 243, Recommendation 19-21. We support this Recommendation but recommend revising the language to "...protect vulnerable life-history stages of commercially and recreationally important species".

Reducing Bycatch

P 244. 3rd paragraph. The comprehensive bycatch sampling module developed by East Coast state, federal and interstate partners as part of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, should be acknowledged.

P 244, Recommendation 19-22. We support the recommendation, but it is worth noting that the NMFS and the RFMCs are already proceeding to develop regional bycatch reduction plans.

Managing International Fisheries

PP 246-7. We agree with Recommendations 19-23 through 19-26.

Chapter 20: Protecting Marine Mammals and Endangered Marine Species

General Comments:
This chapter addresses issues regarding marine mammals very well, while not sufficiently addressing issues involving the conservation of marine turtles, an important mutual federal and state effort in the southeast.

The Marine Mammal Protection Act

P 253, Recommendation 20-1. We support this proposal.

Jurisdictional Confusion

P 254, Recommendation 20-2. It would be more effective to shift oversight of all marine mammals under the jurisdiction of USFWS rather than NMFS. This would alleviate most of the inherent conflict that arises within NMFS with different branches of the agency currently responsible for regulation of commercial fisheries and protection of most marine mammals.

Recommendation 20-3. This recommendation should be expanded to mandate improved coordination with the states. Federal agency jurisdiction of marine turtles can be confusing to state managers attempting to work within the federal authority framework, developing cooperative agreements, and pursuing funding under section VI of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Systematic program support of state conservation programs through Section VI as intended under the ESA is needed to ensure fulfillment of the implementation of recovery plans for turtles and all endangered marine species. The National Marine Fisheries Service's recent direction has been away from line-item support of on-the-ground management activities at the state level, and promoting more research based projects through competitive applications through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. This makes state management activity under section VI cooperative agreements more difficult to achieve, and goes against the spirit of the ESA for the recovery of threatened and endangered species.

Unclear Permitting and Review Standards

P 254, Recommendation 20-4. Clarification of terms of "take" and harassment are needed, but permitting standards for research and management efforts toward the recovery of a species under the ESA need to be taken into consideration when permitting decisions are made.

The Meaning of Harassment

P 255, Recommendation 20-5. Clarification is needed as to the effect of these recommendations on the ESA. Would the definitions consider the severity of population status and trends for individual species? Will permits be issued regardless of the stock levels solely based on the definition of the terms "harassment" and "take?" The term "meaningfully disrupt" needs to be more specifically worded.

The Promise of Programmatic Permitting

P 256, Recommendation 20-6. Programmatic permitting should be used very judiciously. Blanket permits without individual review can lead to regulatory challenges and abuses. Reliance

on federal and state law enforcement agencies to expend a greater enforcement effort without additional funding is not an option for success.

It is not clear whether the Marine Mammal Commission is a member of the interagency team described in the second bullet under this recommendation.

Expanding Research and Education

P 257, Recommendation 20-7. We support the recommendation with the specification that the Marine Mammal Commission and species specific recovery teams should be directly involved with this program development.

Effects of Noise on Marine Mammals

P 257, Recommendation 20-8. We support this recommendation. It should be expanded to include acoustic and percussion effects of all protected marine animals, not just marine mammals. The term "operational activities" in the last line of the recommendation needs clarification.

Domestic Action

P 258. The characterization of the possible effect of ocean noise on marine mammals as a "high-profile, lower impact issue" in the second paragraph is contradictory to the preceding discussion on page 257 regarding the effects of noise on marine mammals.

Chapter 22: Setting a Course for Sustainable Marine Aquaculture

General Comments:
The discussion on marine aquaculture correctly points out the need for better coordination of regulation and research at the federal level, and continued and enhanced collaboration with state, business, and academic stakeholders. Creation of a new Office of Sustainable Marine Aquaculture within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to be responsible for federal marine aquaculture is a positive step toward this goal. We support this action.

The focus of this Chapter seems to be aquaculture for consumptive purposes. A deficiency is the lack of mention of the use of aquaculture for stock enhancement purposes, and the consideration of issues associated with that application of aquaculture. Caution should be exercised in any use of farm-raised fish to supplement wild stocks for purposes of stock assessments for Endangered Species Act determinations.

There is also no mention of the economic disruptions caused by aquaculture imports on the US domestic markets, such as the blue crab fishery in the 1990's, or the southeast shrimp fishery in the past two years.

Marine Aquaculture in Offshore Areas

P 271, 2nd paragraph, last line: add "or other marine uses, e.g., traditional fishing grounds" after "navigation".

Developing a New Marine Aquaculture Management Framework

Introductory paragraph on page 272 should be clarified to indicate that the federal and state agencies along with industry and academia should be involved in developing as well as implementing a new integrated, coordinated framework.

Coordinated Action

PP 272-3, Recommendation 22-1. We support this recommendation, as noted in our general comments.

Implementation

P 273, 3rd paragraph. It should be noted there is potential for coordination through the interstate marine fisheries commissions. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has undertaken aquaculture coordination initiatives relative to certain species.

P 273, Recommendation 22-2. We support this recommendation. Recognizing that the states have jurisdiction for nearshore waters, we urge the close coordination by the new office within NOAA of all regulations, policies, and other programs with the states.

Increasing the Knowledge Base

P 274, Recommendation 22-3. The recommendation that the Office of Sustainable Marine Aquaculture should set priorities for the research and technology programs, in close collaboration with academic, business, and other stakeholders should specifically mention states as one of the stakeholders.

Chapter 23: Connecting the Oceans and Human Health

Managing Marine Bioproduct Discovery and Development

P 280. We recommend elevating the narrative in the last paragraph under this section regarding permitting and licensing bioprospecting of public resources in the federal zone, to a recommendation.

Marine Bacteria and Viruses

P 282. 2nd paragraph. The impacts to the local beach related tourism is understated. There is an urgent need for more accurate bacterial indicator standards, and for better source identification techniques. Federal fiscal resources need to be directed to this issue through the EPA grants with the states pursuant to the BEACH amendment of the Clear Water Act.

P 284. Recommendation 23-2. The Centers for Disease Control should be specifically listed in the targeted organizations to support expanded research efforts.

Chapter 24: Managing Offshore Energy and Other Mineral Resources

Enhancing the Federal-State Ocean and Coastal Partnership

P 294, Recommendation 24-1. We strongly concur with this recommendation, which is a companion to funding source recommendations in Chapter 30.

Environmental Issues Related to Offshore Oil and Gas Production

P 297, Recommendation 24-2. We recommend adequate support be directed to the Minerals Management Service's Environmental Studies Program. The first bulleted item should note monitoring inclusive of deepwater sites.

Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC)

P 300. A recommendation should accompany this narrative. NOAA should re-establish an updated, regulatory structure for commercial OTEC so as to be proactive.

Part VII.
Science- Based Decisions: Advancing Our Understanding of the Oceans

Chapter 25. Creating a National Strategy for Increasing Scientific Knowledge

General Comments:
Georgia is proud of the academic and scientific efforts currently underway in our state to understand coastal and oceanic processes. The State of Georgia works diligently to ensure that the information provided from these efforts is translated and used by our policy and management officials. However, we share the Commission's concern with the declining overall health of our oceans and coasts, and with the decline in the federal research budget for oceans and related issues. Therefore, we strongly endorse the Preliminary Report's call for a significant increase in federal investments in ocean and coastal research, to levels at least double of current expenditures. These investments will lead to strengthened partnerships between scientists and managers. In addition, we strongly support the development of a Committee on Ocean Science, Education, Technology and Operations (COSETO), under the direction of the National Ocean Council (NOC), thus ensuring coordination and integration of federal and regional programs.

Establishing a National Strategy

P 306, 4th paragraph. Georgia is proud of the significant accomplishments of its Sea Grant Program, and supports the recommendation to enhance the national Sea Grant Program (pages 90-91), which will be able to target regional needs within the framework of national ocean science efforts. In addition, the development of a new, national ocean research strategy to focus national efforts will greatly improve the effectiveness of these increased research efforts by ensuring strong independent review of all science applications, by taking into account the needs of local, state and regional managers, and by working to ensure partnership between different organizations and disciplines within the broad area of ocean science.

Reviving the Federal Investment

P 307-308, Recommendation 25-1. We agree with the recommendation for a substantial increase in the coastal and ocean research budget in the near term, and the direction of a portion of those funds to enlarge Sea Grant. Sea Grant has over 30 years of experience in conducting open and competitive selection process and administering projects with multiple partners. Sea Grant also acts as a "pass through" for NOAA and other federal agencies.

Coordination and Prioritization

P 309, Recommendation 25-2. The recommendation states that the national strategy should, among other tenets, "reiterate the importance of balancing basic and applied research projects." Rather than further the divide between basic and applied science, the recommendation should underscore need for a translation function, such that the results of scientific research are made available in a way that allows them to be useful for decision-makers.

P 312, Recommendation 25-3. We strongly support this recommendation and advocate a companion emphasis in Chapter 8 recommendations (8-12 and 8-13) to promote the professional expertise needed to accomplish this action item.

Chapter 26. Achieving a Sustained, Integrated Ocean Observing System

General Comments:
Georgia strongly echoes the Commission's call for the implementation of a national Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), linked to global efforts. We agree that the NOC should make development and implementation of a national IOOS a central focus of its efforts. Built to serve regional needs, the current IOOS models will greatly enhance our understanding of the coastal and global ocean. Georgia and the Southeastern U.S. region have already initiated a regional OOS, the Southeast Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing System, and endorse the recommendations in the Preliminary Report. Georgia Sea Grant is a partner in the SEA COOS along with our Sea Grant counterparts in FL, SC and NC as the outreach and educational component of this regional COOS. With a strengthened research effort and a linked, national and international observing effort, the U.S. will be able to meet today's ocean and coastal information challenges of critical importance to Georgia's citizens, such as improved hurricane track prediction, resource management and maritime shipping safety and efficiency.

National Planning

P 322. Whereas it is crucial to implement the IOOS, it is equally important to continue the USGS stream gage monitoring network and revive the associated water quality monitoring program, with particular attention to the most downstream gage in each river. The USGS information is essential for quantifying land-derived run-off to the coastal zone, and is vital for interpreting almost all estuarine observations. The long-term record of streamflow is required for understanding past trends in freshwater inflow and for predicting how it might change in response to future management decisions or climate change. Coupled to that, the USGS water quality measurements allow an estimate of the loading of nutrients and pollutants to the coastal zone. This program has been allowed to lapse in many areas, and is believed by our State to be crucial for meeting many of the water protection goals laid out in the CZMA and CWA.

P 322, Recommendation 26-2. Ocean.US and NOAA, currently taking major roles in the preoperational IOOS work, are the logical entities to oversee and coordinate these activities.

Critical Environmental Variables

P 325, Table 26.2. Other protected marine species (e.g., threatened and endangered marine species other than mammals, should be specifically identified among the important biological variables to be measured by the national IOOS.

Chapter 27. Enhancing Ocean Infrastructure and Technology Development

General Comments:
The Report demonstrates that funding for infrastructure for ocean research and education has fallen well behind that necessary to keep pace with the passage of time and changing technology. In order to strengthen our knowledge base, improve capabilities for earth and ocean observations, and improve the science literacy of U.S. citizens, the State of Georgia strongly supports efforts to enhance this necessary infrastructure. By doing so, the nation can enhance the vitality of our ocean and maritime commerce, and help our coastal and ocean managers resolve the issues that they face with coastal development in a manner that allows both economic growth and the continuation of healthy coastal ecosystems.

We agree that the most effective way to maximize utility of such improvements is to encourage and fully support partnership efforts. For example, in Georgia, the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography campus houses a variety of academic, state and federal partners, who share common goals and collaborate to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of their workforce, technology, and infrastructure.

A Federal Modernization Fund

P 344, Recommendation 27-4. We agree with the high priority areas for funding under this recommendation. The third and fourth dedicated fishery research vessels referenced in the second bullet, are long overdue for replacing retired and or obsolete vessels.

Chapter 28 - Modernizing Ocean Data and Information Systems

General Comments:
Progress is being made in this area (particularly through NSF requirements). It will be useful to have better access to monitoring information, but it is important to also think about quality control.

Interagency Planning

P 353, Recommendation 28-1. Regional, state, and local stakeholder users of the ocean and coastal data and information should be incorporated into the planning organization. A good model is the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program comprised of 23 state, federal and interstate agency partners.

Future ecosystem management will depend on ecosystem models and adequate continuing monitoring programs and be organized regionally into Large Marine Ecosystems (LME). The academic and resource management community in our Southeast U. S. LME has made substantial progress in developing collaborative programs that will create the scientific basis for ecosystem management. MARMAP and SEA COOS are two excellent examples of the regional approach to ecosystem science.

Part IX
Moving Ahead: Implementing A New National Ocean Policy

Chapter 30-1: Funding Needs and Possible Sources

General Comments:
The State of Georgia strongly supports increasing the nation's investment in ocean research and education, as well as data collection, analysis and dissemination. The Administration and the Congress should at a minimum provide increased support in the FY 05 and FY 06 budgets currently or soon to be under consideration for key coastal and ocean management, research, monitoring, and science programs, to jump start this action agenda under current authorities. While the report recommends doubling the nation's investment in research and science and establishing an Integrated Ocean Observing System, it is essential that adequate support be provided for information and tools to assist communities their planning efforts, which will in turn collectively address broader ecosystem and regional objectives.

New Revenues for the Federal Ocean Family and State Government Partners: The Ocean Policy Trust Fund

P 377, Recommendation 30-1. We strongly support the establishment of the Ocean Policy Trust Fund. The fund should be dedicated, not subject to annual appropriation, and not supplant existing funding. The program should be developed to assure that any new uses comply with all federal requirements, including federal consistency. It would be important that such funds not be tied to burdensome requirements that could reduce efficiencies of current processes. We further support full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund and the National Historic Preservation Act. Further, the trust Fund should support the full funding needs for current coastal and ocean management laws (e.g., CZMA, Magnuson-Stevens, NEP, etc.) Funding for these programs should be at least doubled consistent with recommendations for science.

Acknowledging the Cost of Taking Action

P 374, Table 30.1. There is a discrepancy in the start up cost identified for IOOS in this table as compared to the start up cost identified on page 330, Table 24.6. The information in the two tables needs to be reconciled.