



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

June 1, 2004

THE GOVERNOR

Admiral James D. Watkins, USN (Ret.)
U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
1120 20th Street, NW
Suite 200 North
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Preliminary Report (Report) of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (Commission). I commend the Commission on the obvious thoughtfulness and hard work that went into preparation of the report and its guiding principles. I am also pleased to note that the Commission responded with creativity and imagination to Pennsylvania's issues regarding ecosystem and watershed management and the need to rationalize federal ocean-related activities.

As you finalize recommendations for institutional management, I want to emphasize that environmental protection of our oceans and Great Lakes is a priority. As you work out the proper institutional relationships in your final report, the roles of states and territories need to be effectively defined, with recognition of issues of sovereignty and stewardship responsibilities for use and protection of our natural resources. Beyond that, an effective response to serious issues will require strong federal leadership as we articulate goals, establish priorities, and implement actions. The Great Lakes water quality efforts provide a useful model of effective federal leadership, state partnership, international cooperation, and public participation.

Partnerships developed among federal, state, and local partners have been key to many of Pennsylvania's economic and environmental success stories. I am concerned that the structure based on Regional Ocean Councils currently being proposed by the Commission bears a resemblance to the Federal Regional Council efforts of the 1970's that failed primarily from lack of recognition of the proper and required roles of states, counties, and municipalities.

Pennsylvania is finding it extremely useful to reorganize our environmental efforts on a watershed basis, with implications for all of our economic and social activities. I applaud the Report's recognition of the intimate connection between coastal resources and the farthest reaches of their watersheds, and that hypoxia, drought, water use, and pollution impacts emphasize this connection. As a commonwealth, we have extensive experience with interstate river basin compacts and cooperative water resources management in our five major watersheds. Based on our experience, I recommend that national ocean efforts be based on as large a watershed scale as possible and all related federal efforts focused similarly on the Pacific, Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico, and Atlantic basins. This would provide an effective basis for both regional and international cooperation. Regional advisory councils based on these watersheds and structured around state authorities could then further refine their individual focus, transparency and committee structures as appropriate.

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In developing regional organizations, primary consideration should be given to membership based on elected principals or their representatives from the states and territories. Use of existing Coastal Management and Sea Grant programs should be maximized to build federal governance, information, and research capabilities. Focusing and clarifying watershed roles within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is a necessary step, anticipated by the White Water to Blue Water Initiative. The ideas proffered for building new advisory, science, information and education frameworks, with future changes in legislation and organizational structure meant to incorporate or eliminate duplicative activities, need further debate.

The proposal for a National Ocean Council in the Executive Office of the President bears closer examination. The Ocean Council called for seems in fact to be a re-creation of the existing Coastal America Federal Agency Partnership structure. This partnership is already intended to advance ocean issues through the Council on Environmental Quality, which by legislation presently incorporates air and land as well as water issues in its considerations. If this organizational relationship to address the oceans aspects of the Earth's operating systems has been underutilized, then it could be further defined and emphasized to reflect your proposals, instead of increasing structural complexity.

While not strictly meeting the definition of oceans, the Great Lakes (which contain approximately 20 percent of the world's available fresh water and have marine-scale issues of national importance) deserve greater specific attention in the Report, as do the living resources of their basin.

Related to the distribution of funds from the proposed trust fund based on Outer Continental Shelf activities, while priority should go to states with active exploration and extraction programs, major consideration should also be given in any funding formula to states or territories that handle a considerable amount of the resultant vessel and port traffic and refining processes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to the preliminary report. Its emphases on coastal watershed management and rationalizing the organization of federal ocean policymaking, implementation, science, education, and information activities are welcome additions to the dialogue in our joint efforts to manage coastal and ocean resources in a critical time of increasing stresses and demands.

Sincerely,



Edward G. Rendell
Governor