

COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO

SILA M. CALDERÓN  
GOVERNOR

June 2, 2004

Admiral James D. Watkins  
Chairman  
U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy  
1120 - 20th Street, N.W  
Suite 200 North  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

I am writing in regards to the comments that were requested to the Governor's Draft of the Preliminary Report prepared by the United States Commission on Ocean Policy. This report intends to make recommendations on the ocean policies, making sure that practical and immediate solutions are presented in addition to the long term plans that require a lot more effort and coordination between the beneficiaries of the ocean's resources.

The Department of Natural and Environmental Resources reviewed the preliminary report and considers it to be an excellent tool that integrates a series of strategies that can be considered by each region to promote the conservation of marine and ocean resources. This agency will be presenting more detailed and specific comments to the preliminary report that should be taken into consideration; nevertheless, there are several general ideas that I would like to share with the Commission:

- The establishment of an Integrated National Observing System that will require its main implementation at a regional level will allow open communication lines between regions to share information directed toward assuring the conservation of our marine resources. The oceans surrounding the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have very unique conditions separate from the ones in the United States, thus the establishment of a Caribbean Region should be considered during this process.

- The development of strategies at a national level have to be evaluated to ensure the real effects of its implementation at a regional level, therefore it is important that each region develops its own public policy that addresses its needs but with the same national goals. For example, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico established this year through the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources a new regulation for the sustainable management of the marine resources. This legal framework has to fit within the goal established at the regional level.
- The conservation of marine resources is of utmost importance to the Caribbean Islands, in particular since it provides a significant portion of the food supply to its people and it serves as an important economic development industry.
- The education of citizens is an essential part of any governmental initiative; hence an adequate ecosystem management program for each region needs to be in place to allow the development of specific goals to be achieved through the educational programs.
- The scientific research in all natural habits is of extreme importance to all. The recommendations in this area should consider that each region may have its own need, thus research should be funded and coordinated at that level.
- The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has been an integral part of the work coordinated by the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force for the conservation of coral reefs and its marine communities, that is why it is recommended this task force be an integral part of the public policy recommendations.

These are several ideas that I understand need to be considered during the development and implementation of public policies for the conservation of ocean and marine resources. Since the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico shares many of the views expressed by the Commission, we support the implementation of a proactive plan to control the impacts on our marine habitats.

Best regards on the upcoming developments.

Sincerely,



Sila M. Calderón