

Synopsis of a Statement by

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To the

U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

**Coastal Urbanization/Land Use Change and Effects on the
Ocean Panel**

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I am pleased to be a participant on the panel this morning, and offer the following points relative to social, economic and cultural aspects of coastal and marine issues in the Mid and South Atlantic area of the U.S., most of which are relevant to the rest of the U.S. as well.

1) It is well known that the total human population living, working, or recreating at the coast and on the ocean is increasing. The demographics of this population are also changing. The population is getting older and richer. In Carteret County, North Carolina, the population of the developed barrier island, Bogue Banks, is on average ten years older and has a household income \$10,000 above the adjacent inland areas. These demographic changes not only affect the cultural character of coastal areas, but result in demand for a different set of infrastructure and public and private services.

2) In many areas, traditional – often specific racial or ethnic – populations are being displaced by rising property values. Workers, especially those in lower-paying service jobs, often have difficulty commuting to jobs in their former areas of residence.

3) In general, the economies of coastal areas are converting from extractive and heavy industries to dependence on leisure, tourism and retirement. Commercial fishing, for example, is becoming displaced because of competition for waterfront land and the dedication of marinas to recreational clients. This is also evident in the politics of fisheries management, where some recreational groups are advocating the dedication of most marine finfish to recreational uses through the formal fishery policy system. In general, increased dependence on leisure-tourism industries makes many coastal areas susceptible to variations in factors such as destination preferences, gas prices and other travel costs. This shift also has implications for the siting of facilities such as ports and military bases.

4) The quality of beach and water access is extremely variable across the region. Most of the states in the region have had coastal management programs that include coastal access programs for several decades, but access is still low and increasingly difficult because of the trend towards “exclusive” businesses and residences. This is especially problematic in light of the displacement of low and modest income populations from water-adjacent property.

5) Capacity for comprehensive planning and management of coastal areas varies greatly across the region. While all coastal states in the region have coastal management capacity in some form and some areas have experience with programs such as the National Estuary Program, most coastal municipalities and

counties in the region still lack basic comprehensive planning frameworks and resources.

6) In general, even though use of the coastal and marine environment is among the heaviest in the nation in the Southeast, there is still a lack of understanding of common natural phenomena such as barrier island movement, sea level rise, tide and storm impacts, estuarine function, fishery population dynamics and ocean hazards. The farther offshore, the worse the problem of lack of knowledge and understanding.