

Testimony of Glen H. Carpenter
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on behalf of Governor Ronnie Musgrove

before

The United States Commission on Ocean Policy
New Orleans, Louisiana
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Chairman Watkins and members of the Commission, I am honored and appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is Glen Carpenter and I am the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. At the request of Governor Ronnie Musgrove I am here today to offer my recommendations on the direction our national policy should go regarding the conservation of the oceans, coastlines and estuaries of the United States.

Clearly, the living ocean and its related ecosystems operate under nature's laws, not by the manmade charters that established state, county, and parish lines. Thus the health of our oceans is not related to political boundaries, and we need to slightly modify our approach to looking at the stewardship of our marine resources.

- I) I think that this requires us to redefine "Coastal Zone" to recognize the influence of all watersheds (except truly isolated ecoregions) on the coastal, estuarine and ocean environs. Laws, regulations, and policies related to ocean health cannot be structured along arbitrary lines or political boundaries. It must be recognized that even though the equations that describe the transfer of water from one place to another, on our planet, may seem complicated, all rivers flow to the sea. For this reason a coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy must include:

- a) Freshwater in-flow policy related to the health of the coastal, estuarine and ocean environs. The policy should ensure that historical uses of limited resources, including fisheries and fresh water, would continue and relate to sustainable land and water use policies.
 - b) Restructure federal agencies so that all coastal and ocean programs can be housed in or coordinated by one agency, by perhaps expanding NOAA interests inland beyond the immediate coastal zone, or in the alternative, formal communication requirements between the agencies and the states.
 - c) Regulate by ecoregions rather than by political boundaries, particularly in the area of regulating wetlands alteration. Technology has advanced sufficiently to allow for mapping of ecoregions and governments frequently operate within interstate compacts.
- 2) We must acknowledge the greatest tool we have at our disposal, to improve the stewardship of our ocean and coastal resources, is the will of the American people. Few historians would deny that once the American public recognizes that they are part of the solution millions step forward to make a difference. Our national policy must include as a first order of priority the education of the public “all the way up the stream” and throughout the watersheds. Paint the big picture for those citizens who never visit the ocean. For example, the school children and the farmers in the heartland need to understand that over-fertilization of cropland and the resulting runoff and nutrient-enrichment there results in the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico hundreds of miles away. This in turn reduces fisheries production impacting the recreational and commercial fishing industries resulting in economic impacts beginning in the local area then

moving up the watershed. Additionally, we must accomplish the following three (3) missions:

- a) Continue the study and education of non-point source pollution causes, detection and prevention. Encourage citizens everywhere to avoid contributing to the problem and empower them to help enforce laws related to water quality.
 - b) Promote the concepts of the Conservation Reserve Program and Wetlands Reserve Program and extend it into applicable areas of the coastal environments.
 - c) Teach the value of an acre of wetlands in terms of seafood resource production, flood control, pollution filtering and coastline protection.
- 3) Our national strategy must heal existing wounds in the immediate coastal zone and estuaries. Focus laws and policies on habitat reclamation and preservation for purposes of ensuring not only a sustainable resource, but to also provide incentives to reclaim what resources have been lost. Resource protection and reclamation would be accomplished through the following:
- a) Provide federal assistance programs for failing municipal sewage systems in the coastal areas.
 - b) Provide federal assistance programs for voluntary acquisition of non-state owned tidally influenced areas.
 - c) Increase activities in the Conservation Reserve Program providing conversion of agricultural lands to a natural landcover, and in the

Wetlands Reserve Programs providing for conversion of marginal and timberlands to their original land cover. Provide federal buyouts and conversion to natural landcover of other trouble spots throughout the coastal zone.

- d) More clearly define “wetlands” and map the rates and patterns of loss of wetlands by type over the past 30 years.
 - e) Conduct and track on a nationwide basis, by ecoregions, wetlands mitigation projects efficacy rates. Develop mitigation tracking programs that allow for easy follow-up and enforcement.
 - f) Study and develop policies on deforestation and other landcover conversion rates and impacts associated with biomass alterations on the health of coastal, estuarine and ocean environs.
 - g) Develop a financial assistance program for immediate relief after natural coastal and ocean disasters, with thorough advance mapping, planning and logistics for the coastal zone provided in detail.
- 4) Reassess federal laws and policies regarding future development of coastal environs. Specifically:
- a) Define “water dependency” and develop policies to better ensure wise use of shorelines for truly water-dependent endeavors.
 - b) Develop a policy requiring “in-kind” mitigation for the most endangered types of wetlands.

- c) Review federal subsidies for developments in 100-year flood plains.
 - d) Tie information gained from natural hazards response programs to permitting programs to minimize the probability of future impacts.
 - e) Facilitate federal/state inter-agency meetings as part of the permitting process to help ensure that all aspects of currently legislated environmental protections are addressed.
- 5) Assist the states in marine fisheries and habitat protection law enforcement.
- a) Increase federal funding for the ongoing joint cooperative enforcement agreements between NMFS and the states to help ensure wise management compliance and sustainable harvesting activities of commercial and recreational fisheries.
 - b) Transfer technologies such as remote sensing, GIS, and GPS from federal agencies to the states to assist in enforcement of fisheries and habitat protection laws.
- 6) Promote sensitive energy exploration and new clean energy sources.
- a) Provide incentives to use and develop environmentally sensitive methods for tapping existing petroleum reserves in the coastal areas.
 - b) Continue to promote development of renewable, clean, low-impact energy sources to minimize the probability of environmental damages resulting from petroleum product spills.

In closing, I would like to thank this Commission for the important work you are doing. I believe that now is the right time in history for this work to be done, as evidenced by the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 701) currently being considered by the U.S. Congress. And your conclusions will have a positive affect on enhancing the marine environment and help to ensure its long-term viability. I hope that the strategies that I have recommended will be of help. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my views with you.