

November 26, 2002

James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman

Mr. Chairman,

Thank for the opportunity to testify before the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy at the Great Lakes Regional Meeting this past September in Chicago. I was delighted to provide input to the discussion on ocean governance and hope that my remarks will be helpful as the Commission develops its recommendations for a comprehensive national ocean policy.

With regard to the additional follow-up questions that were sent, unfortunately the first four questions do not refer to my testimony. I would like, however, to briefly respond to the fifth question regarding the recommendations in "Striking A Balance- Improving Stewardship of Marine Areas." Given the benefits of hindsight, I do find it necessary to underscore a particular aspect of the recommendations of "Striking A Balance."

In order to address the complex and confused system of governance of our nation's coastal waters, my committee made three recommendations:

1. Establish a National Marine Council to define national objectives and coordinate multi-party agencies, parties and interest groups.
2. Create Regional Councils where there are serious conflicts or high resource values and existing programs are not able to effectively address such issues.
3. Maximize existing programs through more effective collaboration between federal and state programs.

Given the entrenched nature of the problems concerning governance of U.S. marine areas and the increasingly discouraging accounts of the state of our oceans, I would now suggest that a system of Regional Councils be a mandatory component of marine governance and management. In "Striking A Balance" we suggested that Regional Councils be created to address issues only when necessary, however, I now believe that the Regional Councils will be needed to operationalize any national ocean policy.

Regional councils would provide technical assistance on marine management issues, ensure the application of scientific and monitoring information, develop alternative processes for resolving disputes, and encourage participation by local interests in governance decisions. These regional bodies would coordinate planning among federal and state agencies, mediate disputes and ensure that regional problems are addressed in the most appropriate manners.

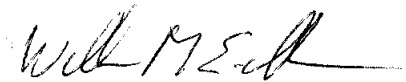
Regional councils should encompass whole coastal ecosystems regardless of political boundaries. The role of the regional councils could include the following issues:

- Coordinate planning and management among state and federal agencies;
- Coordinate fiscal planning including pooling funding from government programs or agencies;
- Mediate and resolve disputes among agencies and stakeholders;
- Facilitate intergovernmental agreements;
- Waive some regulatory requirements to achieve performance-based goals;
- Execute stakeholder contracts;
- Provide technical assistance and training;
- Ensure accountability.

I hope that this clarification of the potential utility of Regional Councils will help inform your Commission as you begin to discuss various policy options to address the key issues associated with developing a comprehensive and coordinated national ocean policy. I believe that a governance system that includes Regional Councils, in conjunction with a system of marine zoning, could help our nation address the precipitous productivity declines and degradation of our oceans.

Once again, I appreciate having had the opportunity to address the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. I look forward to continued interaction with you and your Commission during course of your deliberations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Will M. Eichbaum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

William M. Eichbaum
Vice President
Endangered Spaces Program
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