

Good Afternoon, my name is Jonathan Kelsey. Over the past day and a half I've attended this meeting in my capacity as a coastal management specialist with NOAA's National Ocean Service. I'm providing these comments as a resident of the State of Hawaii. I'd like to thank the Commission for this opportunity to comment and commend you in your efforts to provide for the representation of all four U.S. Flag Pacific Island jurisdictions at this meeting.

From these two days of testimony by these respected members of this Pacific Island community, it should now be clear to you that this region is unique within our nation. Unique economically. Unique culturally and politically. Unique in its geography. And unique in its coastal and ocean environments. In this region, these unique facets are all intertwined.

We have heard a number of ambitious, progressive ideas on how to meet the challenges of ocean and coastal management in this region. I'd like to use my time this afternoon to briefly mention some critical policy considerations – based on this region's unique factors – for the commission to keep in mind as it moves forward to carry out its national charge.

First, these Islands are unique economically – The region's economy is heavily influenced by three main economic systems – marine extractive (including subsistence and commercial activities), tourism, and federal (both military and grant-based funding inputs).

What does this mean locally to these jurisdictions? These Islands lack the financial and technical resources to support sustained, comprehensive ocean and coastal resource management and rely heavily on federal funding in these efforts. Policy recommendations from the Commission need to acknowledge that these jurisdictions may not have the resources to implement mandates, as do their mainland brethren.

Second, these islands are unique culturally and politically – Although significant portions of the funding that supports ocean and coastal management and other governance functions is federal, the unique cultural and political features of these jurisdictions often do not fit well within the confines of many federal regulatory programs. Policy recommendations from the Commission need to provide the flexibility to accommodate the local, traditional, forms of governance in the region.

Third, these Islands are unique geographically – U.S. Flag Pacific jurisdictions are a long way from one another within the region and even further from the beltway. The costs of doing business here are higher than on the mainland. Yes the sun shines, it's warm, the water is blue, and most visitors are on vacation, but regardless of these hardships, federal ocean policy makers, like yourselves, do need to visit these islands to understand the issues of this region. Policy recommendations need to bring the beltway to the Pacific and the Pacific to the beltway.

In addition these islands, in many ways share more in common with their international neighbors than their domestic counterparts. Policy recommendations from the Commission must allow for regional coordination – both international and domestic.

Finally these Islands are unique in their coastal and ocean environments. These jurisdictions are small, have narrow coastal plains, nearshore deepwater drop-offs, and coastal zones that span the entire island - mountaintops to the reefs. Diversity and endemism are unparalleled under the U.S. Flag. Policy recommendations need to allow the flexibility to address the unique ocean and coastal environmental characteristics of these Islands.

In closing, while these considerations may be somewhat of an oversimplification, I respectfully urge the Commission as it moves forward to remember this visit to the Pacific and these unique cultural, political, economic, geographic, and environmental considerations. Thank you.