

June 4, 2004

Admiral James D. Watkins, U.S. Navy (retired)  
Chair, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy  
1120 20<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Suite 200 North  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

I write to submit the official comments of the State of Rhode Island on the Preliminary Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. The State of Rhode Island fully endorses the vision and goals of the Preliminary Report. I offer my compliments to the Commission on this important and historic work. We are proud of the contributions of one of our own on the Commission, Dr. Robert Ballard of the University of Rhode Island. The Preliminary Report is both a bold strategic statement and a comprehensive policy prescription. It will guide our nation well in developing an ocean policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As its name “The Ocean State” implies, Rhode Island is proud of its ocean heritage, its 420 miles of shoreline, Narragansett Bay, and its extensive watershed. Rhode Islanders have a long and strong tradition of ocean living. From our colonial history as a shipbuilding and trading center to the modern facilities engaged in marine technology research, Rhode Island has relied on its Bay and the ocean to support and sustain economic growth. Commercial and recreational fishing, tourism, research and development, military facilities and marine transportation are important drivers of our economy.

Rhode Island also has a proud history of environmental stewardship. We understand well that the health of Narragansett Bay is inextricably linked to the health and management of the ocean. Improving the vitality of both is a paramount mission of my administration. Narragansett Bay and its watershed are the heart and soul of the State. The Bay is a rich and vibrant natural resource that supports a dynamic ecosystem and defines our cultural heritage. Last year, I formed the Governor’s Narragansett Bay and Watershed Planning Commission to develop a broadly-shared vision for the protection and sustainable use of the Bay as both an environmental

Admiral James D. Watkins, U.S. Navy (retired)  
Chair, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy  
June 4, 2004  
Page Two

and economic resource. In the past, weak coordination among state agencies and the private sector has hindered Rhode Island's effectiveness in protecting the Bay. In response to this call for statewide action, more than 160 experts from all walks of life are now serving on my Bay Planning Commission.

Rhode Island is doing its part to invest in our waters. I have recently asked Rhode Islanders to renew their financial commitment to our Bay, its watershed, and the ocean. I have proposed nearly \$50 million in new funds to reduce excessive nutrients in our waters and improve our pollution control systems. It is vital that the federal government also increase its financial commitment to ocean and coastal programs.

In particular, we strongly encourage the federal government to increase funding for ocean exploration and research. We see ocean exploration as an exciting new initiative that will help our nation play a leadership role in educating the public about the ocean environment, conserving and using ocean resources wisely, and building public interest and support for critical ocean research. As you know, the University of Rhode Island is a national leader in the ocean sciences and Commissioner Dr. Robert Ballard leads a world-class ocean exploration program at the University.

Again, Rhode Island will make the financial commitment necessary to support these groundbreaking efforts. I have recently committed that Rhode Island will contribute its share of the costs for a next-generation research vessel commissioned by the National Science Foundation. We strongly encourage the federal government to increase our nation's scientific investment. Ocean exploration is an exciting frontier that promises tremendous scientific and economic benefits.

In almost all cases, we find the vision and goals we are pursuing in Rhode Island mirrored by those of your Commission. These areas include a holistic regional and ecosystem-based approach to natural resource management; specific policy revisions and support for improving water quality; implementing extensive research, monitoring, assessment and evaluation to increase public awareness and promote accountability; promoting fact-based decision-making based upon the best science available; improved habitat conservation and protection; building a constituency for oceans, coasts and watersheds among decision-makers and the general public through increased public education on ecosystem issues; and making a clear call for the funding needed to accomplish these objectives.

Admiral James D. Watkins, U.S. Navy (retired)  
Chair, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy  
June 4, 2004  
Page Three

The result of Rhode Island's long history of seafaring is a wealth of expertise in oceans and coasts, including the historic presence of the U.S. Navy. We have drawn upon the knowledge of these experts—representing academic, governmental, environmental, and business interests—in preparing the State's response. The formation last year of my Bay Planning Commission brought together a broad-based collaborative of interested parties to assist in the development of this unified response. They have my sincere thanks for their dedication and diligence. They truly reflect the best of the Rhode Island spirit and love for the ocean.

We have grouped our comments into four major topic areas, which we believe reflect the main issues addressed in the Preliminary Report's executive summary and allow for a logical affiliation with your issues and clarifies our intent. These are: New Policy Directions and Governance Frameworks; Strengthen Science and Research; Ecosystem-Based Management; and Enhanced Education, Outreach and Information Dissemination.

In addition, one specific area of economic interest to coastal regions not included in the major topic areas is the pursuit of technology and industrial development from marine life sciences. The marine life sciences include diverse disciplines such as aquaculture, advanced biomaterials, biopharmaceuticals, biomass energy sources, and numerous yet-to-be-discovered applications. The United States represented a small fraction of this \$60 billion global industry in 2000, however, our potential for growth is vast. Rhode Island intends to be a leader in this emerging field.

I am honored to offer Rhode Island's comments on the Preliminary Report. Rhode Island pledges its full support in the effort the Commission has begun. I look forward to the publication of the final document.

Sincerely,

Donald L. Carcieri  
Governor