

21 June, 2011

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator,

We write on behalf of our millions of members to urge you to co-sponsor S. 973, the National Endowment for the Oceans Act. The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico focused the American public on the ecological and economic value of our ocean and coastal resources like never before. Now, merely a year later, as Congress looks not only at increased safety but increased production, we must also seize this moment to dedicate funding for marine conservation, restoration, monitoring, and research.

Senator Whitehouse and Senator Snowe introduced the National Endowment for the Oceans (NEO) Act as a bi-partisan effort to ensure that present and future generations benefit from the ecological, economic, educational, social, cultural, spiritual, nutritional, and recreational resources of our oceans, coasts and Great Lakes. NEO provides for grants to states, regional, tribal, and federal entities, as well as non-profit organizations and academic institutions, using funds primarily from offshore energy activities and a portion of fines from violations of federal law in offshore waters. NEO grants will fund activities to conserve and restore ocean resources as well as to develop the baseline science, monitoring, and observation data to facilitate sustainable uses that will create jobs and support coastal economies. In addition, funding for research and planning for ocean and coastal effects of climate change will ensure that coastal communities and resources are resilient and able to adapt to changing conditions.

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico highlights why a healthy ocean matters. A healthy ocean regulates and sustains our climate and provides much of the food we eat, the air we breathe, and the ecosystem services that support healthy fisheries and provide valuable recreational activities. The marine waters that cover over 70% of the Earth's surface are connected. Currents like the Loop Current in the Gulf of Mexico transport heat, nutrients, and, sadly, pollution such as that from last year's oil spill across thousands of miles. Migratory species such as neo-tropical birds and Atlantic Bluefin tuna rely on marine and coastal habitats and connect remote areas across space and time. Shipping and marine transportation link marine and coastal environments across the globe. Clearly, the long-term impacts of the BP *Deepwater Horizon* spill will extend beyond the geographic boundaries of the Gulf of Mexico, and demonstrate the need for research and observation.

The Gulf of Mexico oil spill underscored the connection between healthy oceans and coasts and vibrant coastal communities and economies. In the Gulf of Mexico alone coastal and marine ecosystems support nearly 820,000 jobs and create \$14.5 billion in wages and income impacts. Activities to protect, restore and understand our oceans also promote robust coastal economies. An economic analysis by the Economic Policy Institute estimates that each \$1 million of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries work, which includes restoration, generates 20.3 jobs. Baseline science and monitoring activities can

facilitate development of sustainable ocean uses like renewable offshore energy that create jobs and lessen our dependence on foreign oil.

Given the ecological and economic importance of marine and coastal ecosystems, we should invest more in monitoring, researching, protecting, and restoring the health of these systems; promoting their resilience so that they can better recover when disasters happen, whether man-made or natural. Offshore oil and gas activities generate considerable revenue. The National Endowment for the Oceans Act would ensure that some of the revenue that comes from the extraction and use of ocean resources is invested back into our oceans in such a way that does not incentivize new drilling.

Just as the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a critical means of protecting the terrestrial environment we also need dedicated funding for our oceans and coasts. A commitment to healthy oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes should be part of the response to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. We urge you to co-sponsor the National Endowment for the Ocean Act and pass it this fall as part of the Senate legislation in response to the oil spill.

Business and Recreation

Boat and Motor Superstores
Cape Cod Commercial Hook
Fishermen's Association
Capt. Franklin Adams
Capt. Marcia Foosaner
Capt. Scott Owens
Captain Justin Reiger
Carolina Bonefishing
Coastal Planning & Science, Inc.
Creative Contractors Inc.
Crystal Blue Seafood
Deepwater Wind
Double Haul Guide Service
Eltrose Farms
Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2)
Estuarine, Coastal & Ocean Science,
Inc.
Fishbuzz.com
Flatlined Charters
Guide-Line Charters

Impact Assessment, Inc.
JL Photo
Joe's Jigging Spoons
Just-in-time Charters
Key Limey Charters
Mitch Surfboards
North Swell Media & Consulting
Nunnco, Inc.
NYC Fly Fishing
Octopus Marine Services
Off the Banks Charters
Offshore Wind Dc
Outlaw Charters
Pura Vida Divers
Riomar Charters
River Palms Cottages & Fish Camp
Rufus Wakeman's Charters
Saltwater Angler
Savannah Fly Charters
Savannah Fly Fishing Charters

Sea Favorites
Sea Keeper Consulting
Sea Samples
SeaGrass Grow
Seagrass Recovery, Inc.
Shaffer Automotive
Shark Savers
Silver Lining Fishing Charters
Snook Foundation
Snook Nook
South Florida Diving Headquarters
Stuart Fly Fishing
T Grande Advertising
Taylor Shellfish Company
The Wild Side Guided Adventure
Underwaterjournal.com

Conservation Community

Above the Reef
Association of National Estuary
Programs
Atlantic Salmon Federation
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Casco Baykeeper
Center for Environment, Commerce &
Energy
Conservation Law Foundation
Conservation Science Institute
Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Downeast Salmon Federation
Environment Maine
Environmental Defense Center
Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition
Florida Wildlife Federation

Friends of Casco Bay
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Indian Riverkeeper
Institute for Ocean Exploration Trust
Lower Neuse Riverkeeper
Marine Conservation Institute
Massachusetts Association of
Conservation Commissions
Massachusetts Audubon
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
Natural Resources Defense Council
The Nature Conservancy
Northeast Great Waters Coalition
Ocean Champions
Ocean Conservancy
The Ocean Foundation
Ocean River Institute
The Otter Project
Pacific Environment
Quest Ecology
Sailors for the Sea
San Diego Coastkeeper
Save the Bay (Narragansett Bay)
Sea Education Association
Sea Turtle Conservancy
Seacoast Science Center
Sheep Mountain Alliance
The Snorkel Bob Foundation
South Carolina Coastal Conservation
League
Stellwagen Alive! Friends for our
National Marine Sanctuary

Surfers' Environmental Alliance
Surfrider Foundation
Trust for Public Land
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Wildlife Conservation Society
World Wildlife Fund

Scientific Community

Alliance for Earth Observations
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean
Sciences
California State University Council on
Ocean Affairs, Science &
Technology (COAST)
The Florida Aquarium
Gulf of Maine Research Institute
Mote Marine Laboratory, Inc.
National Association of Marine
Laboratories
New England Aquarium

Pacific Islands Ocean Observing
System
Rhode Island Sea Grant College
Program
San Francisco State University-
Romberg Tiburon Center for
Environmental Studies
Scripps Institute of Oceanography
The Sea Grant Association
Skidway Institute of Oceanography
Society for Integrative and
Comparative Biology
Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing
Regional Association
Southern California Coastal Ocean
Observing System
University of Florida
University of Michigan- MI Sea Grant
University of Washington
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution