



JEB BUSH
GOVERNOR

STATE OF FLORIDA

Office of the Governor

THE CAPITOL
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0001

www.flgov.com
850-488-7146
850-487-0801 fax

June 18, 2004

Admiral James D. Watkins (Ret.)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
1120 - 20 Street, N.W.
Suite 200 North
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

I commend the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy for their extensive review of national ocean policy.

Florida has a vested interest in protecting ocean water quality and marine life. Our economy and quality of life depend on a clean and healthy environment. Sandy white beaches, crystal clear ocean water and marine fisheries draw millions of visitors to Florida annually, creating jobs and generating billions of dollars in revenue for our state. The overwhelming majority of Florida's residents live along our coast.

Over the last five and a half years, Florida has made significant progress to protect critical resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean. In 2001, we worked with the federal government to reduce the size of Lease Sale 181 by 75 percent providing, for the first time, no new leasing anywhere in the eastern Gulf of Mexico off Florida or within 100 miles off the Alabama and northeastern Florida coast. That same year, Florida designated 151 nautical square miles to expand the boundaries of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, home to the only coral reef barrier system in North America, to create one of the largest underwater refuges in the world. Just last year, Florida designated gaps in the coral reef system to lay new fiber optic cable, protecting the productive marine habitat while providing a gateway for information networks to South America and the Caribbean.

Florida is using innovative techniques to expand environmental protection without new laws, litigation or regulation. In 2000, the 15 Member Lines of the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, along with federal agencies like the U.S. Coast Guard, established a partnership to improve environmental management on passenger ships to protect ocean water and marine life. The Clean Boating Partnership works with marinas, boatyards and boaters to voluntarily implement common-sense environmental practices that prevent pollution and protect Florida's waterways.



Governor's Mentoring Initiative

BE A MENTOR. BE A BIG HELP.

1-800-825-3786

Admiral James D. Watkins (Ret.)
June 18, 2004
Page Two

There is much to learn from Florida's experiences and successes.

Environmental management must be based on sound science. Florida is using state-of-the-art coastal observation technologies to monitor water quality and marine habitat. A national network of coastal and ocean observing stations would provide comprehensive, real-time data, which would enable resource managers, researchers and fishermen to make more informed decisions to protect public safety, habitat and wildlife, and the economy.

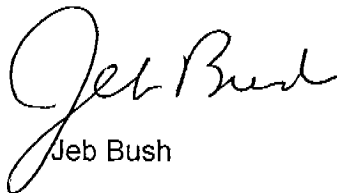
Neighboring states must work together to protect the oceans we share. Coordinating our efforts and financial resources is the most efficient and effective means to achieve maximum environmental results. Florida has already invited our fellow Gulf States to participate in a regional effort to establish solutions for the Gulf of Mexico without burdening taxpayers with additional layers of government.

Regional partnerships ensure coordinated and comprehensive protection for natural resources across political and jurisdictional boundaries. Restoration and protection of America's Everglades is an equal partnership between Florida and the federal government that can serve as a model for the nation.

Finally, long-term stewardship requires participation from all those that use the ocean for their livelihood or recreation – individuals, businesses and communities across the nation. Educating the public as well as fostering the next generation of scientists in today's classrooms is the first step toward achieving that goal.

The Commission's preliminary report has identified compelling challenges. It is vital that our nation rise to meet them.

Sincerely,



Jeb Bush