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April 22, 2004

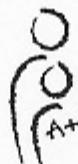
Admiral James D. Watkins (Ret.)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
1120 - 20 Street, N.W.
Suite 200 North
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the preliminary draft report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. Like the Stratton Commission, the Commission on Ocean Policy faced a daunting challenge and rose to meet it thoughtfully and comprehensively. I am grateful for the Commission's commitment to improve our nation's ocean policy and congratulate the members for undertaking this important task.

Florida remains a leader in coastal and ocean management. Our state is home to 41 Aquatic Preserves, 3 of the nation's 26 National Estuarine Research Reserves and the largest underwater refuge in the world. Drawing millions of tourists every year, Florida's clear waters, world-class beaches and coral reefs support a \$51.1 billion tourism industry. Recognizing the importance of our coastal ecosystems to our economy and quality of life, Florida has taken several important steps to strengthen coastal protection during the last five years:

- Restricted oil and gas drilling off Florida's Gulf coast by partnering with the federal government to purchase existing leases and preclude new lease sales.
- Established an equal partnership with the federal government to implement the 30-year, \$8 billion plan to restore America's Everglades. Ahead of schedule, Florida is returning a more natural flow of water to the Everglades, which will improve water quality in the Florida Bay.
- Improved the health of Florida's coastal fisheries using comprehensive monitoring and science-based fisheries management, protecting our \$8.5 billion fishing industry.
- Established, together with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Tortugas Ecological Reserve, one of the largest marine reserves in the world, to protect marine habitat.
- Established a "no-discharge zone" in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to protect near-shore waters and reduce pollution.
- Developed a partnership with the cruise industry to protect coastal habitats.
- Adopted a rule for laying fiber optic cable using designated gaps that protects coral reefs while maintaining South Florida as a gateway for worldwide communications.



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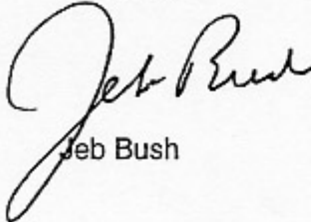
- Conserved environmentally sensitive land and improved wastewater treatment in the Florida Keys to protect water quality and the world's third largest barrier reef.
- Established an Office of Boating and Waterways to support Florida's \$14 billion marine industry and encourage clean and safe boating in state waters.
- Administered the Florida Coastal Management Program to guide federal decisions, protect our coasts, share information with our citizens and improve scientific knowledge.

While Florida's accomplishments are noteworthy, the Commission's review of ocean policy reflects the extensive and complex challenges facing resource managers. Meaningful solutions can only come through local, state, regional, national and international cooperation. As Florida prepares a formal response to the Commission's work, certain recommendations already deserve recognition and support. We must:

- Work together at all levels of government to establish a sound framework for developing strategies that better protect our ocean resources across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Increase coastal and ocean education to instill a stronger sense of stewardship in our citizens for ocean resources.
- Use a comprehensive, science-based approach to manage the seas off our coast. While science should direct our management decisions, we need not wait for scientific certainty before acting and can strive for continual improvement using a variety of best management strategies.
- Reaffirm the effectiveness of state-federal partnerships by maintaining and strengthening the federal consistency provisions of the Coastal Zone Management Act.

During the upcoming weeks, Florida will review the details of the Commission's preliminary draft report. I anticipate the report will provide additional insight and recommendations that will lead to cohesive local, state and national efforts to further protect a global resource. Thank you again for your hard work and dedication to sound ocean policy.

Sincerely,



Jeb Bush