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February 24, 2012

National Ocean Council
722 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, D. C. 20503

Re: Comments on National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan

The Florida Ocean Alliance respectfully submits comments on the National Ocean Policy Draft Implementation Plan prepared by the National Ocean Council. We applaud the National Ocean Council for this ocean management initiative and want to ensure the potential for its success as it is implemented in the coastal states.

The Florida Ocean Alliance is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing together the private sector, academia, nonprofit research organizations and environmental groups to protect and enhance Florida's ocean and coastal resources for continued social and economic benefits. Our membership is broad and inclusive, providing a healthy stakeholder perspective on the Draft Plan. We believe that increased stakeholder involvement at the state and local level is not only critical but that it will also significantly increase the chances for success of this Plan. Over the past three years, the Florida Ocean Alliance has raised the ocean management issue within the state of Florida. Our latest report ("Oceans of Opportunity") is attached to this letter and contains specific recommendations for involving stakeholders in this effort. We also wish to urge the Council to include Florida as one region, rather than splitting it into two parts between the southeast and the Gulf regions. While Florida borders both the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean, it is counterproductive to split it between two regions, instead of focusing on the integration of ocean policy within the state. This includes the unified treatment of ocean observing, mapping and infrastructure. The state deserves special recognition for its lengthy coastline, and should either be a new region or contained as a whole within an existing region. Lastly, it is critical to provide for funding if this Plan is to be successfully implemented.

Thank you for considering our comments. We wish you success in your efforts towards implementation.

Sincerely,

Manuel Almira
Chair

attachment

Background

Coastal and ocean spatial planning is an essential first step for Florida to become a national and global leader in marine industry development, emergency planning and response and natural resource asset protection. The Florida Ocean Alliance (FOA) recommends that Florida be proactive in developing a comprehensive plan for use and protection of its oceans to leverage emerging opportunities for industry diversification, cluster development and job creation, while preserving the long-term integrity of natural systems. FOA members represent ocean-related industries in tourism, ports, shipping, fishing, boating, cruising, technology, as well as scientific research organizations, academic institutions and public interest groups.



"Florida's beaches are the reason that tourists visit our coasts to enjoy Florida's clear waters, pristine sands and beautiful sunshine. Tourism is rebounding in Florida in 2010 and 2011, and the beaches of St. Petersburg and Clearwater demonstrate how critical this sector is to the state's economic well-being. Our beaches alone produce \$2.8 billion in economic impact to the state's economy, with \$88 million in state and local taxes."

DT Minich, Executive Director of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Convention and Visitors Bureau

Emerging opportunities for job creation and sustained economic growth are associated with Florida's coastal oceans. These opportunities include oil and gas exploration and production, energy from wind and currents, offshore aquaculture, mineral mining, applied research and technology development and opportunities created by expansion of Florida's coastal and ocean observing system. As these opportunities

arise, so do the potential conflicts they create with existing activities and the need for healthy oceans. It is widely acknowledged that the nation's oceans are being overwhelmed with increasing demands and competing activities, ranging from renewable energy to aquaculture, new activities that present conflicts with more traditional uses of the oceans for fishing, recreational boating and shipping. To encourage the development of new ocean industries in Florida and ensure that current uses and resources are managed sustainably, the state needs a plan for use of its ocean waters, just as it has for its land. Florida's economic, environmental and social well-being depends on it.

"Florida will recover from its economic downturn. With the use of marine spatial planning to develop new uses of the oceans and enhance existing uses for better economic gain, we can hasten such recovery while ensuring sustainable benefits from our ocean resources."

Michael W. Sole, former Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection



Our oceans and coasts drive our economy. In Florida, oceans and coasts generate a total of almost \$562 billion in cash flow and hundreds of thousands of jobs.¹ Directly related to the ocean are over 500,000 jobs and over \$13 billion in wages, for a total contribution of \$25 billion to Florida's total gross domestic product.² These varied uses are "often incompatible not only with one another, but also with

¹National Ocean Economics Project. *Phase II, Facts and Figures: Florida's Ocean and Coastal Economies Report*. (2008). Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute for Florida Oceans and Coastal Council. Available at <http://www.floridaoceanalliance.org>

²Ibid.

the need to protect what remains of fragile marine ecosystems.³ As a result, governments are redesigning regulatory strategies to accommodate and coordinate multiple uses of oceans, relying on coastal and marine spatial planning. While these changes challenge Florida's policymakers to make wise choices on the use of oceans, they also provide great promise for the state's economic rebound.

"Florida's cruise industry attracts millions of passengers to the state every year, with five cruise ports, including several of the leading ports in the world: Port of Miami, Port Everglades, Port Canaveral, Port of Tampa and Port of Jacksonville. Cruise lines contribute \$5.8 billion in direct spending and 115,093 jobs, with wages of nearly \$4.9 billion for Florida workers. Onshore visits produce an estimated \$784 million in spending from 7.6 million passengers and crew." *Bob Sharak, Executive Vice President of Marketing and Distribution, Cruise Lines International Association*

As the state's economy begins regaining lost ground, marine spatial planning can help guide policymakers to better develop its ocean resources in an effective and efficient way. Activities related to ocean management are ongoing and the needs will only increase in the near future. Several important developments at the state and federal level have brought ocean management to the forefront of policymaking. Florida's legislative activity is moving parallel to the federal initiative for a new national ocean policy and final recommendations released in 2010 by the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and announced in President Obama's Executive Order.⁴ The order establishes a National Ocean Council to direct implementation by executive agencies and specifically calls for marine spatial planning on a regional level to enhance planning and management of the nation's oceans and coasts. Regional Advisory Committees will help regional planning bodies develop regional plans.⁵ The National Ocean Council is developing Strategic Action Plans to achieve nine priority objectives, and draft plans will be released in the summer of 2011. In February 2011, the President appointed a Governance Coordinating Committee to manage ocean policy issues and assist the National Ocean Council in soliciting input from local

stakeholders and government. Commissioner Kristin Jacobs of Broward County, Florida, has been appointed to the Coordinating Committee, along with 12 other committee members from across the nation. This activity demonstrates progress on marine spatial planning in the federal arena.

"Maritime activities at Florida's ports generate more than 550,000 direct and indirect jobs and \$66 billion in total economic value, including \$1.7 billion in state and local tax revenues. In addition, every dollar invested in ports yields nearly \$7 to the state's economy. Add in the opportunities with the Panama Canal expansion, and I think it is clear that Florida's seaports have much to offer when it comes to assisting with recovery of the state's economy."

Doug Wheeler, President of the Florida Ports Council



At the state level, a report was issued by the Florida Select Policy Council on Strategic and Economic Planning, Florida House of Representatives, in April 2010,⁶ assessing the main risks to the state of oil and gas development in Florida's coastal waters. The number one recommendation from this risk reduction study is that "Integrated maritime planning and management is critical to reducing risks from prospective oil and gas activities."⁷ In 2010, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$250,000 to develop a web mapping tool to track natural resources and activity in the oceans as a means to aid the state in coastal and marine spatial planning. This appropriation marks the beginning of data collection essential for marine spatial planning. The Florida Oceans and Coastal Council, charged with developing priorities for ocean and coastal research, recommended ocean management using marine spatial planning and assessment to achieve ecosystem-based management

³ "A plan for the ocean." *Nature* 465 (May 6, 2010) 9.

⁴ Executive Order 13547—Stewardship of the Oceans, Our Coasts and the Great Lakes, July 19, 2010, and White House Council on Environmental Quality, *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force*, July 19, 2010.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Sections 4, 8.

⁶ Florida Select Policy Council on Strategic and Economic Planning, Florida House of Representatives, *Florida Gulf Coast Oil and Gas Risk Assessment*. Prepared by Willis Structured Risk Solutions, April 9, 2010.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.



in their 2011-2012 research priorities. A Florida Marine Spatial Plan can be used as a framework to guide decision-making that protects and expands the state's ocean and coastal economy. The marine spatial planning process will include opportunities to diversify industries and create jobs as part of a sustainable ocean and coastal economy.

"Florida's coastal and ocean economies are extremely important. Florida is a significant leader in that almost 80% of Florida's economic activity occurs in the 35 coastal counties. Considering industry groups in Florida that depend completely on the ocean's resources, tourism and recreation generates 72% of all economic activity, and marine transportation generates 18%. These same two industry groups contribute 15% and 10%, respectively, to the US ocean dependent economic activity."

Dr. James Cato, Professor Emeritus, University of Florida

Response of the Florida Ocean Alliance

To ensure that Florida becomes a national and global leader in coastal ocean economic development and the protection of natural resource assets, the Florida Ocean Alliance recognizes that comprehensive coastal and marine spatial planning is urgently needed in Florida. The Florida Ocean Alliance is uniquely positioned to help develop the case for coastal and marine spatial planning as a response to escalating activity surrounding uses of Florida's ocean and coastal assets. For over three years, the Florida Ocean Alliance has championed the need to improve how oceans and coasts are managed in Florida. The organization has held three Oceans Day Workshops on this topic, in 2009, 2010, and 2011. Three reports were issued: "Oceans of Opportunity: Managing Future Uses of Florida's Ocean Spaces," "Florida's Journey Towards Marine Spatial Planning" and "Moving Ahead: The Next Step in Ocean Management for Florida."⁸ These reports provide a foundation for understanding why ocean management in Florida waters has importance to the state as well as national and global importance and summarize recent activity in this area. The need to balance the economic value of Florida's ocean and coastal resources with their use and conservation is also highlighted and is consistent with the current and future energy needs of the state.

Conclusion

A sea change is underway in state and national policy that may significantly impact Florida's oceans and coasts. That policy shift has signaled an economic transition for the nation, from an economy based on fossil fuels and foreign oil to one based on domestic fuels and clean energy. The state needs a Coastal and Marine Spatial Plan to guide the prioritization of resources in state waters and to help direct activity in federal waters. Coastal and marine spatial planning is critical to adequately address and protect Florida's resources, stakeholder needs, potential stakeholder conflicts, the risks involved and emergency response actions for the state and its citizens.

Description of the Florida Ocean Alliance

The Florida Ocean Alliance is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and enhancing Florida's coastal and ocean resources for continued social and economic benefits. Its members represent ocean-related industries in tourism, ports, shipping, fishing, boating and cruising, as well as those from nonprofit research organizations, academia and public interest groups. The Florida Ocean Alliance is committed to positioning Florida as an international leader in integrating ocean conservation, education and responsible economic development.



⁸ *Oceans of Opportunity: Managing Future Uses of Florida's Ocean Spaces* (2011, forthcoming), *Florida's Journey Towards Marine Spatial Planning* (2010) and *Moving Ahead: The Next Step in Ocean Management for Florida*. (2009). Florida Ocean Alliance. Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Available at <http://www.floridaoceanalliance.org>



Recommendations

The Florida Ocean Alliance respectfully submits the following recommendations to foster the dialogue on coastal and marine spatial planning in Florida. These recommendations are based on discussions at the Florida Oceans Day Workshop held in Tallahassee on March 22, 2011.

Recommendation 1

A Marine Spatial Plan for Florida should be initiated immediately, consistent with reports by the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate in 2010 that recommended proceeding with marine spatial planning. The marine spatial planning process should consider opportunities for industry diversification and job creation as a component of a robust and sustainable ocean and coastal economy.

Recommendation 2

The Florida Ocean Alliance and the ocean science community applaud the recent appropriation by the Florida Legislature to provide start-up funding to initiate marine spatial planning. The state appropriation is a positive step, but additional funding will be required to complete the process. Adequate funding should be secured to pursue and complete this marine spatial planning process, either with federal, state, or private sector funding, or some combination of these source funds. The Legislature should ask the Florida Oceans and Coastal Council to collaborate with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in developing a 2012 work plan for proceeding with marine spatial planning in Florida waters, with external funding from private or public sources.

Recommendation 3

The Governor and Legislature, singly or in concert, should take a leadership role in the marine spatial planning process by convening a body of ocean and coastal stakeholders immediately. This body should include Florida's ocean industries (including both traditional and new uses), state and federal government agency representatives, ocean research scientists in Florida, non-governmental organizations, and representatives of the public to help advise the state as it develops a Marine Spatial Plan.

Recommendation 4

The ocean stakeholder group should be charged with developing an inventory of the state's ocean management issues and begin the process of spatially prioritizing the uses of Florida's ocean and coastal assets. This should include analysis of data, uses, services, and impacts. The group should develop and evaluate future spatial management scenarios and tradeoffs. They should also coordinate actions with the National Ocean Council and regional bodies as they begin the process of federal implementation of MSP in Florida's offshore waters. The state should cooperate with neighboring states in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic region and the federal government in implementing plans in the President's Executive Order.

Recommendation 5

A communication plan should be developed immediately to target interested groups of ocean users and engage them in the marine spatial planning process. Information should be provided in a consistent and transparent manner so ocean and coastal stakeholders can work together with both insight and foresight to plan for Florida's ocean and coastal future. It is critical to engage stakeholders and the public at key points in the process so that future implementation has addressed their concerns earlier in the process.

"Our oceans and coasts drive our state economy. We have an opportunity for careful and planned use of ocean spaces in Florida to maximize economic benefits to the state and nation. There is a need to balance the growing demands for conflicting ocean uses with the public's use and stewardship of its ocean resources." *Kumar Mahadevan, President and CEO of Mote Marine Laboratory*

