CHAIRMAN WATKINS: The Commission will now come to order again.

I will turn the microphone over to the Executive Director for carrying out the public comment period function.

DR. KITSOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have three people who have signed up for public comment. As you may know from the signup process, you have five minutes to make your presentation. This is a listening session on the
part of the Commissioners, so no questions will be asked, but we reserve the right to send you questions in writing and ask you to respond.

Anybody else in the audience who would like to make comments to the Commission, please do so on our web site. Even though this is the last public meeting, while we are writing the report we will still be taking comments during the report-writing stage, so please feel free to do so.

You have five minutes to make your public comment. At the four-minute mark, I will stand up my name tag here which will give you an indication you have one minute left, and I will ask you then to stop after five minutes.

The first person who has signed up is Danielle Hammond, University of South Florida.

Danielle are you--Oh, it's Daniel?
18       MR. HAMMOND:  Daniel.

19       DR. KITSOS:  I'm sorry.

20       (Laughter.)

21       COMMISSIONER BALLARD:  You get six

22       minutes.
COMMISSIONER BALLARD: He's a big guy, Tom.

DR. KITSOS: Well when I saw South Florida, I made certain assumptions and I shouldn't have done that.

MR. HAMMOND: That's okay.

MR. HAMMOND: Thank you. Good afternoon, Commissioners:

The points that will be addressed today are the opinions of the students in a graduate-level class on ocean policy offered at the University of South Florida.

We would like to thank Dr. Muller-Karger for encouraging us to present our views here today.
There are three main topics that we want to touch on today:

One is the concept of fees to cover access to our common property on our oceans.
The other is that of partnerships between the Federal Government, academic institutions, and industry.

Finally, we want to briefly discuss the role the oceans play in the pressing issue of national security. An issue that repeatedly comes up in class and warrants discussion is the extraction and use of ocean resources. Resources in territorial waters and in the EEZ are the common property of all Americans of today and tomorrow. These common resources are entrusted to the Federal Government on behalf of the People of the United States. In addition to the cost of extracting the resource itself, extraction of that property carries environmental costs that are most often not accounted for.
Because market price does not reflect externalities or subsidies, the cost of ocean commodities seem less than they really are.

It is our opinion that a fund needs to be
created, maintained, and dedicated to the risk assessment, hazard mitigation, and economic incentives associated with a given resource.

The monies for this fund would come from various sources like royalties, leases, license and registration fees to be applied toward the privilege of using this specific ocean resource.

A portion of these funds could also include a substantial education effort that reaches schools and the general public.

Another suggestion would be to enact a bid and royalty program for the commercial fishing industry much similar to the timber and oil industries. This would remove redundant fishing and make the industry more efficient.

All uses of our common property should carry a realistic cost so that we can manage them just as we do with anything else in our public and
private lives.

The second recommendation we want to make today is that of outsourcing. Over the past 30 years there has been a tendency for ocean-related federal
agencies to grow. In many cases this is at the expense of creative research and technology development in public and academic sectors.

We would like to see the Commission recommend that these agencies outsource more of the tasks that have slowly been incorporated into regional federal lands.

The People of our country would be best served by the Federal Government utilizing and stimulating regional and local education, scientific research, and resource management capabilities.

This would eventually serve to reduce the redundancy and the duplication of programs within and across agencies.

We feel this would strengthen the link between the private and commercial institutions, as well as between the public and its government.

In addition, a greater emphasis needs to
be placed on the importance of educational outreach programs within agencies. Without such programs, our class would not be able to be here today.

Finally, we would like to briefly address
the issue of national security in the context of ocean policy.

Our Nation has historically been seen as a leader in great measure because of its Naval strength. The Navy plays an important role in protecting not only our Nation's resources and people but those of other nations as well.

We believe that the best way to use this strength is to emphasize the important link between understanding the dynamics of the ocean environment and its association with national security, keeping us generations ahead.

In closing, oceanic research is a fundamental necessity for the protection of our national security interests. These interests are not separate from environmental protection, and ocean policy should reflect the relationship between these ideas.
Thank you, very much.

DR. KITSOS: Thank you very much, Mr. Hammond. That was an excellent statement. If you would provide a copy of that to one of our staff
people, we will get it in the record.

Ms. Erica Feller?

Welcome to the Commission. You have five minutes.

MS. FELLER: Thank you for not calling me "Eric."

(Laughter.)

MS. FELLER: Members of the Commission, on behalf of the Nature Conservancy thank you for the opportunity to provide comment today.

While there are many aspects of the Ocean Commission's work that is of interest to us, my comments today will be limited to the Commission's recommendations on coral reefs, a marine ecosystem with extraordinary biodiversity and human values. The Nature Conservancy is very involved in coral reef conservation in both the United States and internationally. Recognizing the significance of
these and other tropical marine systems, we have pledged to work with Conservation International and the World Wildlife Fund to promote partnerships with a wide range of other organizations to protect
tropical marine biodiversity around the world.

Key components of our efforts are to help greatly expand the area of coral reefs and associated habitats under protection, eliminate threats to the biological integrity of these areas posed by unsustainable fishing, pollution, coastal development, and other factors, and to improve the management effectiveness of marine protected areas.

As a complement to these important actions, our collective work will also seek to build resilience in the face of chronic, large-scale threats such as climate change and MPA selection, design, and management.

Our initial focus is on identifying areas within reefs that are naturally resistant to bleaching and spawning aggregation sites for important reed fishes. These can serve as essential sources for
replenishing areas damaged by large-scale threats.

By linking these source areas through a better understanding of currents, larval dispersal, and recruitment—in other words, connectivity within and
among reefs—we hope to catalyze the creation of
representative, mutually replenishing networks of
MPAs that enhance the recovery prospects of the
component reserves and broader coral reef and
associated ecosystems.

The Conservancy urges that, in addition to
the draft recommendations already in discussion, to
enhance the scope of U.S. international leadership
activities for coral reef management and
conservation, that the Commission also consider
recognizing the impacts of climate change on coral
reefs; recommend the need to manage for that change
through support for targeted research on the
attributes of coral reef systems and marine protected
area networks that make the resilient; and support
for the development of a global network of protected,
mutually replenishing resilient coral reef areas.

Specifically, we encourage the Commission
to include in its recommendations research to better understand resilience of corals to bleaching; explicitly identify areas that are naturally resistant to coral bleaching; incorporate them into
protected areas; and take an active part in global monitoring efforts on resilience to bleaching.

We encourage the Commission to include the identification and protection of spawning aggregation sites for important reef fishes within the scope of the protected areas.

And we encourage the Commission to direct increased attention to better understand connectivity, larval dispersal, and recruitment within and among coral reefs, and to incorporate this information to the design or redesign of representative resilient MPA networks.

We see excellent opportunities for this work to contribute to coral reef conservation actions in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia, as well as other places.

On the subject of international management
of living marine resources, we encourage the
Commission to expand the recommendations on global
leadership in order to have a significant impact on
coral reef management in the countries where most
coal reefs are found.

In addition to research, the Commission should encourage U.S. leadership and support for a wider range of activities, including development and implementation of MPA networks, integrated coastal management programs to provide a supportive governance context for coral reef conservation, capacity building of individuals and institutions that can contribute to coral reef conservation, and learning networks among management practitioners on priority conservation topics.

We urge the Commission to include in its recommendations a need to build upon and expand the multi-faceted coral reef research management and capacity building programs that are currently implemented through NOAA's National Ocean Service, International Affairs, the U.S. Agency for
International Development, and the Department of State, as well as U.S. engagement in and support of the International Coral Reef initiative.

Thank you.

DR. KITSOS: Thank you very much. That
was a very good statement.

Our last public witness--and I think it is fitting that it be so, because Captain Bob Ross of the Coast Guard I think has been with us for almost every hearing we've had, just about, and he would like to say a few words on behalf of the Coast Guard as our final public commenter.

Bob, please proceed.

CAPT. ROSS: Admiral Watkins,

Distinguished Members of the Commission, good afternoon:

Admiral Watkins, you asked yesterday that the Commandant send you a letter addressing certain issues. I have already prepared a rough draft of that and asked Malcolm to make sure it is responsive, but I thought there were some comments that might be beneficial presented in front of the full Commission.
The recent GAO report on Coast Guard levels of effort was mentioned several times yesterday. The support is based largely on the level of resources expended in individual Coast Guard missions or functions. This is a valid measure, but
it is perhaps the crudest measure available.

Another more pertinent measure is results.

For example, despite a significant drop in the resources devoted to drug interdiction in 2002, we achieved the third largest total seizures in history.

We did this by adopting new techniques and new technologies, and especially better use of operational and tactical intelligence.

Our interdiction operations are increasingly cued by specific intelligence. Another example of this is in search and rescue where we have been embarked for a number of years on a campaign to "take the search out of search and rescue."

By using new technologies such as EPERBs and new capabilities such as the distress call localization capability of the Rescue 21 System that
we are currently building, we have been improving our ability to quickly locate vessels and people in distress.

When it comes to search and rescue, time is quite literally the difference between life and
death. Rapidly sending one boat, cutter, or aircraft
to a known location rather than using multiple assets
to search a larger area increases our probability of
success while simultaneously reducing the platform
hours required for SAR.

With regard to comments made yesterday
about reduced Coast Guard attention to SAR, I think
those comments may be based on a misunderstanding of
the situation.

I checked this morning with the Search and
Rescue Program Management staff at headquarters.

They are not aware of any SAR call that went
unanswered as a result of our post-9/11 Homeland
Security task and priorities.

That does not mean that every SAR case
since 9/11 has been successful, or that lives haven't
been lost. But the unfortunate reality is that
success is sometimes simply unattainable, even if we
do everything right and we throw everything we have at the problem. This is just as true before 9/11 as it is after 9/11. Protecting American lives remains the
Coast Guard's highest priority, whether those lives are at risk from terrorist threats, from natural disasters, from accidents at sea, or anything that happens in our operating environment.

All of that said, given our full mission suite the Coast Guard does suffer from a capability gap. However, this is not just a Coast Guard capability gap, it is a national capability gap. There is no agency with unused operational capacity sitting in a ready locker somewhere to which some or another Coast Guard responsibility could be shifted. Doing so would not close the gap; it would only shift the ownership of the problem. The solution is to grow the national capability. My personal belief is that the fastest path to closing the gap runs through the Coast Guard not around it. We have the requisite infrastructure in place today. The deepwater contract for new offshore
assets, the training institutions to properly prepare
an expanded work force, the necessary operational
expertise and doctrine, the naval and aeronautical
engineering expertise required to support the assets,
et cetera, et cetera.

And the Coast Guard is closing its
capability gap. Perhaps not as fast as either the
Coast Guard or the Commission would like, but we are
on a growth trajectory.

The Commission might want to consider
recommending a steeper slope, but from a fiscal
responsibility perspective we must avoid growth so
rapid that it ends up being wasteful or otherwise
disruptive.

I heard a question yesterday about
monitoring VMS information. I believe I am on safe
grounds saying that VMS is only one of many
information sources that will feed into the maritime
domain awareness capability that we are now building.

Within the MDA architecture, there will be
Coast Guard people looking at VMS and other
information on a 7x24 basis. This will take place at national regional intelligence fusion centers, as well as at lower level command and control nodes such as the First District Command Center in Boston, or the Seventh District Command Center in Juno.
Of course we also expect the National Marine Fisheries Service to use VMS data, but whether or not NMFS will have the ability of even the need to provide real-time monitoring on a 7x24 hour basis is a question that NMFS is going to have to answer.

Finally, I would like to talk about the international leadership issue. Yesterday the need for a U.S. leadership on a number of important but relatively narrow areas was raised.

I would submit for your consideration that there is a bigger issue here: U.S. international leadership in ocean issues writ large.

The issues mentioned yesterday would fall into this, but there are other vitally important aspects such as the United Nations conventional law of the sea, the International Maritime Organization, the National Association of Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities, and other international fora.
The U.S. is a leader in IMO because we actively sought that role as a specific national strategic objective, and then earned it through our sustained involvement, our technical expertise, and
our proactive and respectfully couched efforts to win international consensus for improved safety and environmental standards.

I would also suggest to you that our national approach to IMO might serve as a model for U.S. interactions with other international bodies.

For IMO, the Coast Guard is the de facto national lead agency. We head U.S. delegations to IMO, including up to the full diplomatic convention or diplomatic conference level, and we coordinate the interagency and public input processes for developing U.S. positions on issues being considered by IMO.

This does not change the State Department's overall authority with respect to managing international relations. The State Department approves delegation composition and U.S. policy positions, and State is represented on all U.S. delegations to IMO.
This approach does, however, put the working level responsibility on subject matter experts who give significant focused attention to U.S. policy positions and to maintaining our
important international leadership role. This might serve as a model for other issues in international bodies.

Admiral Watkins, Members of the Commission, thank you and congratulations for reaching this important milestone in your work.

DR. KITSOS: Thank you, Captain Ross, for an excellent statement and for all of your help and involvement over these many months.

Mr. Chairman, that ends the public comment period.

CHAIRMAN WATKINS: That completes our agenda for today.

Are there any other business items or other items that the Commissioners would like to raise at this time?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN WATKINS: Absent that, a motion
to adjourn.

(Motion is duly made and seconded.)

CHAIRMAN WATKINS: Okay, all in favor.

(Chorus of ayes.)
CHAIRMAN WATKINS: We will see you all, then. There will be a get together as we roll out in the final endgame with the Congress and the President, the media and so forth, late in the summer. We will inform you by hopefully late July of specific dates that we’ve been able to negotiate in the rollout plan.

In the meantime, go to work. Give us the answers back on the segments that we send you so that we can quickly put together our draft of our report.

Thank you, very much.

(Whereupon, at 3:55 p.m., Thursday, April 3, 2003, the meeting of the Commission on Ocean Policy was adjourned.)