

## **Testimony of U.S. Senator Ted Stevens**

### **U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy Alaska Regional Meeting August 21, 2002 Anchorage, Alaska**

Admiral, you're very kind. As I look down the table I see a great many faces that I've worked with before. I welcome you all to Alaska.

I would like to start by first reminding everyone of the foresight of my great friend Senator Fritz Hollings by once again seeking to have a Commission like this established and its work reviewed. Fritz and I have joined together in many things and I was pleased to join him in the legislation that created your Commission and intend to work with him fully until the whole process is finished. And I do thank you Admiral for coming here, I thank Ed Rasmuson for accepting my suggestion that he join this Commission because I know the dedication of his father and of Ed himself to the whole subject that's under your purview.

This is a very important Commission in my opinion. Each of you was personally selected by the President and by the leaders of Congress on a personal basis. You're charged by Statute to make recommendations on America's use and stewardship of the oceans and our marine resources. I think that's an enormous task and I thank you all for undertaking it.

Many interest groups routinely send reports to members of Congress. Those are generally reviewed by our staffs and once in awhile we get a summary of them. With regard to your activities, I am convinced that Congress will look to the commitment that each of you has made in the past and the commitment you're making now to serve on this Commission and your experience and your expertise out there in the real world. And we will review your report and your proposals on a personal basis, particularly those of us who come from coastal states. You are really predicting our future. Your report could affect our fisheries, marine resource management, energy development, marine transportation and all of the factors that should go into a modern ocean policy.

As you will see while you're here in Alaska, no state is more dependent upon the oceans and no state has done more to sustainably manage its ocean resources for future generations. It's been more than 30 years since our nation conducted a survey such as you're undertaking. And the Stratton Commission report, our nation's only report on the oceans, remains our current guide. We hope that yours will have the same future as the Stratton Commission's report.

Today half of our nation's population lives in coastal areas. By 2025 I'm told that figure will grow 75 percent. And if I outlive Strom Thurmond I'll be around then,

Jim. Over 30 percent of the gross domestic product and 40 percent of new commercial and residential development occurs on our coastlines, as you know. Ninety-five percent of our international trade is shipped over the ocean and by 2010 the value of that trade will double to \$5 trillion. In the Magnuson-Stevens Act we claimed our domestic fisheries out to 200 miles, rescuing them from foreign fleets that used to ply our shores.

As a young Senator, I once went to Kodiak and commandeered a Navy plane (it was then a Navy base) and flew up to the Pribilofs. As we flew up there we counted 90 factory trawlers that were fishing out there during the winter. This was right about the time of the Russian Christmas. We were appalled. I sent them back to make some photographs of the decks of those trawlers. There was everything on the decks from ocean mammals to all types and species of fish. Many of the trawlers had a hole in the center of the deck. They just shoved everything in -- there was a big grinder inside and everything that went down the hole was ground up into meal. Being appalled about that I went back and talked to my friend, Warren Magnuson, and that was the beginning of the 200-mile limit legislation. I think it was, as the Governor said, a very significant piece of legislation.

And another area, offshore exploration is increasing, especially in the Gulf of Mexico. Yet offshore exploration is declining generally. Between 1970 and 1974 the federal government issued 1,339 offshore exploration permits. Between '95 and '99 there were only 540, almost a third of what was issued in the prior five years.

No state is more dependent upon the oceans, as I said, than Alaska. We have half the coastline of the United States, two-thirds of the continental shelf. And again, as the Governor said, we're the only state that's bordered by two oceans. We have more rivers and lakes than any other state, 3,400 miles of coastline, 365,000 miles of river, 3,000,000 lakes, including 1,000,000 lakes that are over five acres. We are a state related to everything you're doing.

Our Port of Anchorage handles 90 percent of all the goods sold and consumed in Alaska along Alaska's railbelt. Eighty percent of our population lives along that railway. One million barrels a day of Alaska's most valuable export travels down the Alaskan oil pipeline then by water to the Lower 48. That was 2.1 million barrels a day back in the days of the Persian Gulf War.

Despite attacks from outside environmental groups Alaska's Commercial fishing industry remains the state's largest private sector employer. It produces half of our nation's fish and over half of those people in this state who earn an income earn a portion of that income through fishing.

As a result --I want to leave with you these words: everything you do will affect the future of my state. You've heard about 250 witnesses during your first seven

public meetings and you're going to hear Alaskans this week that will join many who have highlighted the need for a sound, sustainable resource management plan. I think you'll also find that we Alaskans have successfully conserved our resources. We seek to maintain our stewardship over our ocean's resources. Our state Constitution mandates sustainable fisheries management, ensuring the resource will be there for future generations.

Despite our record of success, there is an effort underway to reassert federal control over our fisheries. During the 90's, one of Alaska's most important sustainable resource industries came under severe attack from the environmental community. The timber harvest in this state in the 17 million acre Tongass National Forest fell from 450,000,000 board feet to less than 50,000,000 board feet. A well funded lobbying effort and a suffocating litigation strategy by extreme environmentalists convinced many courts that timber was not a sustainable industry in Alaska. As a result, all of our pulp mills and almost all of our sawmills are shut down. There is no real timber industry here anymore.

I mention that just as a matter of history. Because the same people, using the same money sources, are undertaking the same strategy to try and shut down the commercial fisheries of this state. The only difference between timber and fishing is that federal law in the past has allowed greater local control over the fisheries. The Regional Fisheries Management Council system allows those directly involved in the fishery to manage the resource responsibly but without second-guessing by federal officials. I hope that that will continue after your report, as I believe regional control conserves resources much better than national control does. We have found many, many times in the past where people in the National Marine Fisheries Service had been schooled and trained in other areas of the country and really didn't understand the difference between their area and our area in terms of fishery management.

Other avenues of abuse exist. I do believe that the National Ocean Service is now preparing to define and regulate marine protected areas. They are doing so by virtue of a system created by executive order in the year 2000. This executive order could dilute if not override the resource management statutes that have already been enacted by Congress and approved by past Presidents.

In my judgment the Regional Fisheries Management Councils are the most successful federal-state management process yet created. But the Councils cannot be successful unless their decisions are based on sound science. I mention that to you to raise to your attention the Steller sea lion crisis, as we call it here. In 1999 and 2000 the administration decided that Alaska's offshore pollock fishery should be shut down. Then they looked for science to justify their decision. A federal judge in Washington actually shut down the fishery not because of the suggested science, but because the government could not show that their theory would help Steller sea lions recover anyway. At my request Congress rejected that approach and instead allowed our fishermen to stay on

the water until scientists have an opportunity to analyze the real interactions between fishing and sea lions. We're making great progress.

I do hope you'll go to the Seward Sealife Center and meet some of the scientists involved in that. They have made substantial investments in marine research, and I believe that this research will lead us to some conclusions concerning the protection of those mammals that are declining. The Steller sea lions are not the only mammals in decline; so are the sea otter and the Beluga whale in Cook Inlet, and yet it seems to be a strange coincidence that the killer whales are becoming much more abundant. I'm making a suggestion as to what the scientists ought to study, I haven't made up my mind on that, but I do believe that they should study natural predation in our system besides that caused by mankind. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is something I hope you will pay attention to also.

We're doing a lot up here now to get sound science. A new fisheries research vessel will be named after a famous fisherman home ported in Kodiak in 2004. We funded a new fisheries research laboratory in Juneau. We have the Seward Sealife Center -- I believe they've got some exciting new discoveries to tell you when you visit there about the Steller sea lion. We've even put cameras out on the rocks so we can watch the sea lions through their lifestyle. And they can show you some interesting films of waves washing the sea lion pups off the rocks and the killer whales waiting there to consume them. It's sort of like cash and carry without the cash. These killer whales are wherever infant marine mammals are and we must find ways to deal with the total system of mammals if we're to protect our fisheries.

Now, with a strong Council system in place and developing research infrastructure, I believe this area has the tools to sustainably manage our fisheries with a far greater understanding than we had when we established the 200 mile zone and passed the Magnuson Act. I do hope that you will listen also to testimony regarding ecosystem management. The sea lion crisis showed us that our scientists still do not have the understanding to find the connections between cause and effect throughout our ecosystem. And I really think there are a great many things that we must examine before we get to ecosystem management on a total basis.

For instance, Congress first passed Marine Mammal moratorium in years gone by and then extended that to the Marine Mammal Protection Act. But we may have protected the predators to the extent that we cannot really continue the system of protecting and managing the fisheries. Your recommendations will have an impact, as I've said, upon our fisheries; you'll have an even greater long-term impact on our other resources.

I've been predicting that we will soon start the construction of the 3,000-mile gas pipeline from the Prudhoe Bay area to the Midwest. This project will transport

gas that has been reinjected in the ground as we produce the oil at Prudhoe Bay. As a matter of fact I'm told that the amount that's reinjected is almost as much as Canada consumes daily. Alaska has up to 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that awaits transportation to market. And most of the 100 trillion cubic feet predicted to lay onshore in Alaska is on Alaska's North Slope.

But we have significant oil and gas reserves offshore, particularly in the Arctic. These reserves will likely be developed over the next several decades. Alaska has 170,000 trillion cubic feet of methane hydrate reserves, which will provide a tremendous source of domestic energy long into the future if we learn how to deal with it. Alaska also has tremendous mineral reserves, including one-third of the known coal reserves of North America and the world's largest zinc mine. We will send these resources to the world, into the global economy, through modern port facilities in remote areas.

As you consider your duties I urge you to consider the energy potential of this area also and remember that Alaskan Natives have relied on living marine resources for thousands of years and will do so for thousands more. The effort to develop marine resources off our North Slope must respect their subsistence tradition. As Alaskans, we insist on that. If our future is to include energy exploration activity off Alaska's coast we believe due consideration has to be given to the subsistence traditions of our areas.

Subsistence is not an impediment to develop. Our history shows that we can develop Alaska's energy resources without interfering with subsistence activities. And again, I urge you just to look offshore as you fly out of here and see those oil and gas platforms. Cook Inlet is still a subsistence area and those platforms have not harmed our subsistence activities, commercial fishing, or recreational fishing. Our fisheries management program requires input from all interests: individuals to subsistence to commercial.

I mention that because we have always taken a long-term view on management. I'm here to urge you to take a long-term view on managing the ocean floor too. We've proven our ability to systemically manage the resources under our control. The problem is that we have not been able to have the same degree of control of the offshore areas. We have proven our ability to safely extract oil and gas from beneath our ocean floor and I believe we'll soon find a way to deal with the methane hydrate sources.

Water covers two-thirds of our world, and the ocean off our shores in particular is the largest area in the United States that will be affected by your activities. I do hope that you'll take into account the problems we faced in the past. Our laws have prevented us from developing our most promising onshore energy prospects. And we would be really harmed I think nationally if a new proposal would make the same mistake with regard to offshore areas.

It's my hope that you'll enjoy your visit to Alaska, you learn more about the relationship of Alaska to the seas off our shores and that you will get a chance to spend time in coastal communities and discuss our future with the Native people of Alaska, who have great vision and a great story to tell.

I hope I'm not being misunderstood. I do believe in conservation and sound preventative mechanisms to prevent harm to our environment. I also believe we should oppose anything which will result in new withdrawals of offshore areas similar to those withdrawals onshore that have prevented us from going to our energy resources.

When we build the gas pipeline I mentioned and deliver to the south the equivalent of a million barrels of oil a day, the U.S. will still be importing a third of our natural gas in 2020. We will soon have the same dependence on foreign gas that we have now with foreign oil. Every time the throughput of the Alaskan oil pipeline goes down, the demand for oil from Iraq goes up. Our nation cannot afford to make the same mistake with gas. The gas potential of this country in my opinion lies offshore and I urge you as you go through your hearings to consider America's energy future. Do not make proposals that will lead to Congress and the federal government withdrawing areas off our shores that will prevent the exploration and development of the oil and gas and other natural resources of the outer continental shelf for future Americans.

It's nice to be with you, and I hope you get some time for fishing. If you've got a minute I'll tell you about two hours that we had. In those two hours we maxed out on silver salmon, one hour two different days. There's fish out there still, ladies and gentlemen, so I hope you get a chance to wet a line and enjoy the area.