

**Testimony before the
U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
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On behalf of
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Admiral Watkins and members of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I offer this testimony on behalf of Governor Shaheen.

New Hampshire's seacoast is blessed, and some may say cursed, by its own beauty and attractiveness. Our two coastal counties have grown in population at a rate outpacing counties farther inland. From 1960 to 2000 the growth rates in Strafford and Rockingham Counties were 88% and 180%, respectively. Ten out of the 17 coastal communities had growth rates of over 100% during this time period. The Town of Stratham's rate, although a small starting population base, was a whopping 515% during this time period! The two coastal counties added a total of 230,764 persons. Many of the smaller coastal communities are the ones experiencing the greatest growth rates as well as greatest numbers of new residents. As elsewhere in the United States, our seacoast is under intense developmental pressure. The pressures on the ocean resources are likewise intense.

In the mid-1970s, New Hampshire state government, in response to the call from the Coastal Zone Management Act, began assembling programs to help deal with resource management in its coastal communities. By 1988, the New Hampshire Coastal Program had been approved, covering all seventeen of its tidally influenced cities and towns. In 1989, the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve was dedicated, and has since been implementing its management plan. A new shellfish program has been created through the efforts of several state agencies with assistance from numerous funding sources. Most recently, in 2001 the New Hampshire Estuaries Project was approved, focusing its attention on water quality and shellfish issues. All of these efforts have enjoyed a great deal of local, state and federal political and financial support.

At the same time that state agencies have been increasing their management capabilities, the University of New Hampshire has expanded its expertise in the area of marine science. The Office of State Planning, the Fish and Game Department, and the Department of Environmental Services in particular, have for years utilized this expertise. Research has helped in the management of actual and potential oil spills in the marine environment. Dredging projects have been greatly assisted by work of folks in UNH's Ocean Engineering Department. Nonpoint pollution has been studied through several UNH projects in attempts to quantify septic system contributions to pollution, shoreline erosion problems and bacterial contamination in shellfish, among others. UNH Sea Grant/Cooperative Extension has contributed substantially to outreach and education efforts as well as promoting basic research in marine science. UNH continues to enhance its marine-side capacity, most recently establishing a new Marine Program. And, only recently, the Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) was created, joining NOAA and UNH in a long-term partnership to help managers solve problems with innovative solutions.

The foregoing is presented as background to a number of key points that New Hampshire wishes the Commission on Ocean Policy to consider during its deliberations. We endorse the concept of improved ocean management based on a well-reasoned set of policies. However, today we emphasize the importance of what we have constructed so far, making sure we do not forget those valuable programs and processes while creating anew. We must remember what our requirements are and make sure we have the resources to achieve them. The challenges will be finding the funding for new initiatives, reorganizing programs and agencies with new missions, and developing those well-reasoned policies, which can be embraced by the wide range of constituencies well into the 21st century.

Much of what New Hampshire does in protecting and managing its ocean resources is done on land or in the near coastal environment. Fishermen live onshore but make their living at sea. Cruise ships and ocean freighters wend their way to ports of call such as Portsmouth. The environmental health of the ocean, in our case specifically the Gulf of Maine, depends in large part on the actions taking place on shore and in the watershed. Back yard, front yard, mill yard, boat yard, all yards lead to the ocean eventually, all with potential to do harm to the ocean's health.

Within the area of coastal management, do not forget about the huge successes we have had in improving the health of our near coastal waters and restoring some of our invaluable coastal habitats. However, despite these successes, the job of habitat restoration is far from complete. Protection of critical landside resources is equally important, and it is a task that, in New Hampshire, has called upon the cooperative efforts of governments at federal, state and local levels to accomplish. Again, this job is not done. Sometimes, it involves acquiring development rights and easements, sometimes outright purchase in fee simple of those properties deemed of extreme value. The Coastal Zone Management Act was at the root of this effort in New Hampshire, and the Commission is urged to keep the CZMA front and center in its deliberations.

The Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve is a model of how a coastal acquisition project can protect large areas of habitat which otherwise, by now, would have been developed for housing, commerce or industry. This effort has blended the efforts of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership, through the work of a number of nonprofit organizations, which worked with landowners to bring about the Research Reserve as we know it today. It's still developing. The Commission needs to recognize the future role of this type of effort when creating new policy.

When the Pease Air Force Base was deactivated over a decade ago, a deliberate attempt was made to create a new unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System. One thousand acres of that former air base are now so dedicated, in perpetuity. This Commission needs to include the references to the valuable roles that such federal agencies play in our resource management efforts.

Certainly, one of our recent successes has been the establishment of the New Hampshire Estuaries Project, housed in the Office of State Planning, but networked with other state agencies, including the Department of Environmental Services, the Division of Marine Fisheries, and the Division of Public Health Services. New Hampshire now has a fully approved shellfish program, fully managed and operational. The shellfish program was a product of the Coastal Program and the Estuaries Project. We should not forget to include support for such programs in a new report from this Commission.

Educational efforts abound in New Hampshire's seacoast. Obviously, the University of New Hampshire provides a major part of this effort, as cited above. Other efforts include the outstanding facility and programs at the Seacoast Science Center, which educates the public about ocean resources as well as tidepool critters. Thousands of school children benefit from the programs offered every year. The Sandy Point Discovery Center, as part of the Great Bay Research Reserve, is developing and expanding programs focusing on the estuarine environment. UNH Cooperative Extension is a routine partner with the state in helping to educate the public and provide guidance relative to population growth in the seacoast, particularly in cooperation with the state in the Natural Resource Outreach Coalition. Sea Grant has developed a cadre of volunteers who love to get their feet wet in the pursuit of polluters of our clean water. A new effort is currently being assisted by the Coastal Program at the Aquaculture Education and Research Center in Hampton, which will provide a mobile center, able to be taken to schools and other venues throughout the seacoast. Support for such educational efforts should find its way into the Commission's report.

One of the many areas of interest to the New Hampshire Coastal Program is that of federal consistency. For those states that have approved Coastal Management Programs, federal consistency brings them into the review and decision making process of federal agencies. This process is extremely valuable. It allows New Hampshire to become involved in federal permitting, funding and direct actions they may take. It allows us to participate in federal activities that affect that area offshore on the outer continental shelf. This has kept the state involved through review and comment on

fisheries management plans, gas pipeline proposals and offshore aquaculture projects. In the distant past, New Hampshire was involved in the leasing of OCS exploratory drilling leases. The Commission is strongly encouraged to keep the federal consistency at least as strong as it is, and possibly reinforce it to make the states' role more assured than it is right now. New Hampshire is a partner in managing those resources.

In listening to the continuing debate on the creation of a new Department of Homeland Security, important as it is, all I can imagine is the topsy-turvy nature of this endeavor. More than fifty agencies and parts thereof will be part of the new Department. Not that you will be recommending the creation of a new Department of Oceans, but the Commission on Ocean Policy's job may not be any easier. The federal framework needs to make sense.

In closing, I'd like to commend the Commission on its ambitious schedule. Your task is huge. I feel certain, however, that by taking stock of the ample evidence and input you receive at these hearings, you will undoubtedly possess the best chance for success.

Thank you.