

**Remarks of
Dr. Samuel Bodman
Deputy Secretary
United States Department of Commerce
Before the
Commission on Ocean Policy
November 14, 2001
Washington, DC
(as prepared for delivery)**

Good morning. Chairman Watkins... members of the Commission on Ocean Policy, it is my pleasure to testify today on the ocean-related programs at the Department of Commerce in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Before I begin, I would like to offer you my best wishes and my Department's full support as you undertake your important and enormous task.

As the nation's primary ocean agency, NOAA has broad science, service, and stewardship responsibilities.

They range from operating civilian satellites for weather observation to coastal management... from sustaining fisheries to supporting safe marine transportation.

In light of what we know today about the relationship of the oceans to the atmosphere, I think that integrating these federal programs into a single agency was one of the most insightful recommendations made by the Stratton Commission more than 30 years ago.

Key issues for NOAA track with the working groups you have established:

- Research, especially marine observations, supporting better stewardship and governance;
- Stewardship and raising public awareness through education and outreach;
- Governance including all interested parties in efforts to balance economic demands and development with the environment and sustainability.

At its core, NOAA is a science agency charged with conducting and applying ocean and atmospheric research to address national issues.

Our research and technological advances protect lives, property, and support the economy on a daily basis.

For example, our nautical charts and real-time tidal and currents information prevent accidents along the marine transportation system.

Improved monitoring has also made possible our efforts to predict the onset of longer-term, ocean-related climate shifts, such as El Nino.

We know that employing new technology to improve observations will support a variety of national needs, including—

- Safer and more efficient marine transportation;
- Improved fishery stocks, marine resource, and coastal management;
- More timely and precise emergency and spill response actions; and...
- Mitigating the impact from red tides and other harmful algal blooms.

Equally important to acquiring data is communicating it. The ability to translate scientific knowledge to policy is always a challenge. I urge you to examine how we should manage ever-increasing volumes of data to maximize public benefits.

NOAA also has stewardship responsibilities for living marine resources, including fisheries, mammals, and habitats. Ultimately, stewardship is an ethic that must be shared by the public at large.

The challenge is to raise awareness about the importance of the marine environment to our lives and our future. So, education... providing a basic level of ocean and coastal literacy... is our goal. We have capabilities such as Sea Grant to bring to bear.

Another element of stewardship is the expertise we provide to states and localities. For instance, NOAA has developed risk management and geographic information products to help communities identify areas prone to flooding and other coastal hazards, so they can better plan and mitigate damage from these events.

From our experience, I believe the greatest challenge before the Commission is the issue of governance.

By that I mean fulfilling the broad charge made to you by the Oceans Act to develop recommendations for a “coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy.” Current policies tend to address ocean issues individually with measures aimed at the stewardship of a species or management of an activity.

The alternative is commonly referred to as the ecosystem-based approach.

The ecosystem approach requires looking at the big picture... how the law and our use of the oceans affect our economy, our environment, and our health and how they provide for our long-term needs from this most important resource.

The Oceans Act charges the Commission with developing recommendations for improving governmental coordination and partnerships with the private sector.

Good governance requires identifying and coordinating the roles of federal, state and local governments, as well as nongovernmental and private sector interests.

I would like to stress that NOAA regards its partnerships with academia and the private sector as important and productive assets.

Of course, attempting to give all interests a voice in the decision-making process exposes conflicts and requires deliberation and patience. I encourage you to examine existing governance models and how they might be made more effective.

The Coastal Zone Management Act is a rare example of a law that attempts to accommodate federal, state and local interests. It also charges the states to consider all coastal uses and balance these interests with the environment as they implement their plans.

The fishery management model is also designed to engage all levels of government on a regional basis and includes an active role for nongovernmental interests.

Another example is our development of an area management plan for the Dry Tortugas in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

I also urge you to review the interagency effort on the Marine Transportation System. This is an ongoing effort to address the anticipated doubling of maritime commerce before the system is entirely overburdened.

Before I conclude, I want to briefly mention four issues that stand out.

- Water quality and pollution-- reducing the impact of nonpoint and runoff pollution and the introduction of invasive species;
- Marine habitat and species protection-- for resources known to be sensitive or in decline, such as coral reefs, sea grasses, wetlands, and estuaries.
- U.S. maritime trade-- 95% of our overseas trade is borne on the oceans. Ocean-borne commerce is the gateway through which the U.S. maintains access to the world. Trade is the engine of the global economy upon which so much depends. Our ocean policies must facilitate maritime trade.
- And finally...Several other agencies have already testified how the need to address new and serious threats to our nation's security is altering their focus. The Department of Commerce also is actively engaged in efforts to enhance homeland defense, including reviewing how its science and services can support these efforts.

In summary, improving our understanding of our marine environment is key to developing sustainable, science-based stewardship.

Our nation needs a governance structure that is inclusive yet capable of taking action to ensure the health and vitality of the marine environment for this and future generations.

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.