

**Testimony of John Adams
President, Natural Resources Defense Council**

**U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
Washington, D.C.
November 13, 2001**

Thank you, Leon. And, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for having us and to all of you Commissioners. We welcome you in this discussion that we're all about to enter. It's really very interesting and very challenging and I think difficult because of the really extensive amount of facts that we all have had to undertake to understand. So we've learned a lot and I know you're going to have the same trip and we hope, as Leon said, that we can share what we've done so that we can make some of your trip easier, or at least so you won't have to do exactly the same things that we did. I'm the President of NRDC. We have 500,000 members around the country, offices in east and west and elsewhere. And we have a longstanding commitment to the oceans. We have teams of experienced lawyers working with policy experts and they have been engaged in a wide range of issues involving fisheries and marine mammals and coastal protection.

Our goals are sustainable fisheries, marine mammal protection, prevention of ocean pollution and the creation of ocean wildernesses. And that is the basic premise of NRDC in this work. And that's what we bring to the Commission.

The Commission itself, the mission is to focus on living resources in the U.S. waters and the measures needed to restore and to maintain the health of the marine environment. That's my simple summary of it. We also have been asked to look at the existing laws and the institutions to determine whether they are adequate to address the problems that we see developing here. And that's been a very interesting part of the facts that we have had an opportunity to learn about.

One of the key issues, and the one that I'm assigned today to talk about, is addressing pollution. The Pew Commission has taken a comprehensive look at this issue. It has commissioned three scientific papers: one is an overview of ocean pollution; one is on introduced species; and one is of marine aquaculture. The Commission and the staff are glad to give you those papers so that you can use them in your analysis.

In addition, the Commission has further conducted or is in the process of conducting something different than a scientific paper, but an in-depth review concerning cruise ship pollution, toxic pollution, and noise pollution as it impacts marine mammals. In terms of nutrient pollution, particularly nitrogen has emerged as the most pervasive pollution risk for virtually all of the living resources in coastal ocean ecosystems. Many of the nation's coastal environments are already impacted and we've heard that throughout all of our hearings that we've had.

Some of the symptoms would be algae blooms, loss of sea grass, coral reefs dying, serious oxygen depletion, dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico, Long Island Sound and Chesapeake Bay. And clearly the cause of this is not just from the coastal zone, it's also from inland. It's coming from towns and cities. It's coming from fertilizer, coming from long distances, it's coming from factory farms, it's coming from sewage treatment facilities, and if we have any intention of dealing with this issue, we are going to have to reach way inland to the sources of that is pollution. And that means creating new infrastructure and new funding sources to help get at these kinds of problems which are deadly serious.

Another area is introduced species. We have had a scientific paper done on how introduced species have gotten into this country and by and large they come in through ballasts in ships, and attached to the hulls and there are other ways, but those are the two principal ways. So what can we do to prevent that? We've had a lot of testimony about what can be done about it. I think prevention is the clear direction that we all should be headed there. We don't have recommendations today, but we will be coming up with recommendations shortly on what can be done about these introduced species.

And, finally, another area is aquaculture which Leon has already talked about. And since we are talking about salmon as the largest marine aquaculture business in this country, we're interested first in biological pollution through the escapement of farm fish into the wild threatening endangered or depleted populations with diseases, parasites, or interbreeding. Second would be nutrient pollution through the discharge of waste and the third would be chemical pollution through the discharge of antibiotics and pesticides. So we are in the process of formulating recommendations in the pollution committee and we should be getting there very quickly. And we would be happy to share those with you.

Again, I just want to close by saying, I think it is very important that the work of the two commissions somehow blend together. This is a very critical issue for this country and all of us want to be a part of a positive solution. So I look forward to working with any of you and all of you.

Thank you very much.