

**Testimony of the Honorable Leon Panetta
Chair, PEW Oceans Commission**

**U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy
Washington, D.C.
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Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much for this invitation. I am very pleased to be able to have a chance to appear before you and this distinguished panel and try to work with you in building a working relationship on the challenges that face us with regards to ocean policy. I believe we can develop a shared effort in terms of common goals and a common challenge. We are both interested in exactly the same goal which is to improve the policies with regards to our oceans and to try to protect our oceans. And that's not something that can be done by one group or one agency or one Commission. It only happens if we all work together, and that's the goal that I would propose to you that we work together in an effort to have shared experiences and findings and hopefully recommendations with regards to what needs to be done.

You are obviously engaged in a very broad agenda affecting our oceans. Our Commission, the Pew Oceans Commission is focused on the wildlife, the habitat, the living resources of our oceans. And it is with that in mind that I want to present, along with our panel, some of the areas that we are working on with regards to those living resources.

A little bit about the Commission. It was established in the summer of 2000. It includes a very diverse, independent and balanced group of members. Let me just summarize the membership if I could for you. The original Chairman was Governor Christie Whitman and I was vice chairman. And then as you know she moved on to become head of the EPA and I assumed the chairmanship.

We have a group of elected officials that are on the panel, including Governor Tony Knowles who obviously knows the issues related to the oceans from the Alaska perspective. There is Governor George Pataki who is concerned about pollution issues. There is Mayor Joe Riley of Charleston who is working on coastal development issues. There is Mike Hayden who is the former Governor of Kansas and the past president of the American Sportfishing Association. Also we have former State Senator Carlotta Leon Guerrero from Guam who is familiar with the issues in the Pacific.

We have a distinguished group of scientists, including Dr. Jane Lubchenco who is here who is a Professor of Marine Biology at Oregon State University and the past president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. There is Dr. Charles Kennel who is the director of Scripps. There is Dr. Geoffrey Heal who is Professor of Economics at Columbia. There is Dr. Kathryn Sullivan who is a former Chief Scientist at NOAA and now the CEO at COSI.

We have Marilyn Ware who is chairman of the board of the American Water Works Company. And we have Julie Packard who is head of the Monterey Bay Aquarium. We have commercial fisherman Pietro Parravano and Pat White, who is with us today, who is a lobsterman. Pietro is a salmon and crab fisherman out of Half Moon Bay, California. And then we have a very distinguished group of those involved in conservation, including John Adams who is here today; Eileen Claussen, who is a former Assistant Secretary of State for the Oceans and currently Chairman of the Board of Strategies for the Global Environment; David Rockefeller, a philanthropist involved in conservation issues; and then, of course, Admiral Roger Rufe, who is the president of the Ocean Conservancy.

Together, we have spent about a year going through a large fact finding process. As you will find out, and I'm sure you've already begun to look at, you've got a major challenge in terms of fact finding. All of us bring our experiences to this issue. But the reality is that there is a tremendous amount of facts associated with these issues and we've got to try to determine as much as possible all the facts that we have both from scientists as well as those who deal with these issues every day. We've spoken to hundreds of citizens. We've talked to fishermen, elected officials, scientists, conservationists. We've had hearings in Monterey, my home town, in Hawaii, in Charleston, in Maine, in Alaska. We're going to have a hearing in New York City. We are going to have a hearing in New Orleans and we're also, interestingly enough, going to have a hearing in Des Moines, Iowa, to talk about the impact of farm run off on the Gulf of Mexico.

What do we see right now? It confirms obviously our worst concerns in a sense that our oceans are in crisis. On pollution there is obviously excess nitrogen that is flowing from a lot of non-point sources, from our farms, from city runoff, from sewage plants. There is pollution from cruise ships that go into harbors. We know, we just issued a report on invasive species that tells us that a large number of species are being introduced to various bays throughout our coastline. The result is that pollution is choking about a third of our estuaries. It's impacting on the habitat of our oceans. Our oceans' habitat is changing and it creates, as all of you know, the dead zones that we see often in the Gulf as well as other areas.

Coastal development pressures are increasing. Over 50 percent of our population lives near our coastline. Census figures estimate that the coastal population will grow by 27 million people over the next 15 years. There is no question that with that comes tremendous pressures in terms of coastal development. It has an impact on habitat. It has an impact on our beaches. It obviously has an impact on our wetlands.

Fishing is another area that we've looked at. Our greatest concern is the loss of vital fisheries. I was born and raised in Monterey. We had a sardine industry when I was a kid. Those sardines are gone. The cod industry suffered the same

result. We're seeing reduced species in salmon as well as a number of other species wherever we went. The food chain has been disrupted. We are seeing diminishing stocks of wild fish everywhere we've gone. Aquaculture, interestingly enough, is a growing industry; almost a third of the fish that people buy in this country now comes from aquaculture. And while we don't want to in any way discourage that industry, it does have consequences in terms of the impact on our oceans that we have to be worried about.

And, lastly, the governance issue which is something I know you're going to be taking a look at as well. Right now we have a myriad of agencies and departments and regulations at the federal, state, and local level, regional level, all of which impact on our oceans. But the unfortunate thing is that there is too little coordination in much of this. And ultimately what happens is that a federal court usually winds up making the decisions that impact on policy in these areas. That's not the way to go. Somehow we've got to do what we can to try to improve that coordination with regards to governance.

We have established four committees in each of these areas. We have, as I said, done significant fact finding. We are now beginning to get into the process of focusing on recommendations. Our goal is to complete our final recommendations by early 2003. And we certainly look forward to trying to continue to work with this Commission in the effort to hopefully, as I said, be able to complement each other and be able to join in the recommendations that we make. We need to provide a united front in our recommendations to the president and the Congress and the nation.

The oceans, as we all know, are the cradle from which life came. I think we have a responsibility to be good stewards and to try to do what we can to restore life back to our oceans.

That's what we view as our principal responsibility and obviously we look forward to working with you in that effort.

Let me introduce, if I can, John Adams, who is working on the pollution committee for the Commission.