

Testimony before the US Commission on Ocean Policy  
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My name is Adelheid Herrmann; I currently work for the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (Society) as their Alaska Regional Coordinator with responsibility for a Water Quality grant funded by EPA. The Society is a national organization made up of Native American's and other natural resource professionals.

I am an advocate for including those most dependent on the resources to be involved in the public policy process that address those issues. The grassroots stakeholders should be included in the process at the highest levels.

The Native People of Alaska are experiencing many changes to their way of life. Since they have the direct connections to the ocean resources, it becomes very apparent how important healthy marine systems are to sustain the resource.

I commend those beginning to look at an Ocean Policy for the United States. Hopefully, we are not too late. The Oceans, Seas, and other waterways around the world are all connected to each other. Many of them are in such bad shape we really hope that we are not too late here in Alaska to make some changes in our way of doing business.

The Tribes in Alaska are very concerned about their environment, their resources and the health of their people. In order for the tribes and local communities to comply with basic environmental regulations it takes a lot of work and financial resources. For Example, many of the communities used the open dump concept and in order for them to have a sanitary landfill it needs to be covered. This activity does not come cheap in a rural community where expenses are high. Adequate sewer systems are needed that contains the waste instead of flushing it out to sea, these systems do not come cheap. Resources are needed to help these communities build the infrastructure to allow them to live in a healthy environment.

Policy can be set at many levels, local, regional, State, Federal and international levels. Compliance to policy is another issue. Policy will mainly be words on paper and as policy trickles down there will be more words on paper and more things to comply with and more bureaucracy to try and figure out.

I would ask the Commission to think about a few things.

1. Develop a policy that is inclusive, keeping in mind the grassroots people who are going to have to live with the policy and may want to use it for their different planning and management systems such as watershed or coastal zone management planning or in any way that helps them protect their way of life and their resources.

2. Secondly, to allow for a straightforward roadmap that explains how the tribes and rural residents can use the policy for their benefit.
3. Lastly, as mentioned before, a policy on paper is just that words on paper. To be able to implement this policy there should be a plan of action developed. In this plan of action it would state who is responsible to carry out the plan of action and what financial resources will be available to carry out the work. This policy should be thought of as a tool to help us build more effective processes that actually help those using the oceans.

Thank you for coming here and listening to people and I wish you good luck in developing this comprehensive Oceans Policy.

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