

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Office of the Governor
Harrisburg

The Governor

December 5, 2003

Admiral James D. Watkins, USN
Chairman
U.S. commission on Ocean Policy
1120 20th Street, N.W., Suite 200 North
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Admiral Watkins:

With both a Great Lakes and marine coast, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is graced with a diversity of coastal resources. Given our interest in estuaries, bays, Great Lakes, and oceans, I look forward to reviewing the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's draft report when it is released later this year. I hope the Report will propose new meaningful steps that the federal government can take with its state partners to address the challenges facing our coasts.

Pennsylvania has 120 miles of coastline along the Great Lakes and Delaware Estuary. Nearly three million people live in Pennsylvania's coastal zones. This interface of land and water is crucial to the economy and environment of Pennsylvania, supporting important tourism, fishing, shipping, and other water-dependent uses. Issues ranging from watershed protection to invasive species management, coastal hazards, public access, and dredging affect these uses. In addition to having its own designated coastal zones, Pennsylvania occupies portions of five major river basins and has important roles to play in issues such as restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and finding solutions to hypoxia issues in the Gulf of Mexico.

In Pennsylvania, key programs to address multiple uses of our coastal lands and waters, and the watersheds that feed into them, are underway or under consideration. It is vitally important that the federal government increase its commitment to Pennsylvania and its state partners through enhanced financial support and innovative funding mechanisms. The U.S. Commission's report is an excellent opportunity to explore mechanisms for promoting and providing increased financial support for state efforts.

We hope that the Commission's report also proposes substantive actions on issues with which our own state is grappling. The Commission is uniquely positioned to propose bold strategies for addressing ongoing, as well as emerging, coastal and Great Lakes challenges. These include national and locally significant problems:

- The need to implement effective controls of polluted runoff into streams and coastal watersheds. Pennsylvania has 83,000 stream miles. There is a critical need to put in place controls on urban and agricultural runoff into streams and watersheds. Pennsylvania must cope with more Combined Sewer Overflows than any other state, as a result of aging urban infrastructure. The Commonwealth also has a large number of agricultural operations, including many small family farms, and culturally distinctive Amish and Mennonite communities. There is a critical need for increased federal support of polluted runoff control and of sewage infrastructure improvement programs.
- Sprawl and poorly planned development are contributing to water quality problems, habitat loss, wildlife threats, and a general diminution of the quality of life that Pennsylvanians seek. The Commonwealth is working to address impacts from development by implementing Phase II of the stormwater control program. There is a chronic need for more federal funding to help underpin the Phase II requirements.
- The federal government needs to show more leadership and become a more active partner in supporting and implementing effective growth management programs. This includes bringing Department of Transportation grants for road and bridge building into line with smart growth goals. To help support wiser land use in our state, we are considering an environmental bond that would be partially dedicated to smart growth, anti-sprawl, and wise land-use initiatives. The federal government needs to step up to the plate and provide greater resources and leadership.
- Unwise agricultural practices lead to polluted runoff, soil erosion and resulting sediment loading issues, potential food chain impacts, and other deleterious effects. Pennsylvania is seeking to increase its participation in the Conservation Reserve Program by enrolling an additional 65,000 acres. We believe that there are even more farmers who would be interested in opting into the reserve program if more funding was available. By lowering the state match requirement, more farmers would be able to participate in this important program, thus placing more at-risk lands in the protective program, which benefits water quality and wildlife.

I encourage the Commission to bring bold ideas to the discussion of America's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, while maintaining the best elements of current coastal zone, estuary, and Sea Grant management, research, and extension programs. The threats facing our coastal and ocean resources are real and require an effective approach to management and protection. I look forward to reviewing the Commission's ideas when the draft report is released and stand ready to continue the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's work to better conserve and protect our Great Lakes, estuaries, bays and coastal resources.

Sincerely,

/s/

Edward G. Rendell
Governor