

Mayor John Bell
Gloucester, Massachusetts

Statement to
U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

Regional Meeting
Boston

July 24, 2002

On behalf of the City of Gloucester I want to thank the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy for holding this regional meeting in Boston and seeking the advice of the assembled local experts. New England boasts an extraordinary breadth of talent and expertise in marine affairs. New England's ties to the ocean have always profoundly shaped the way we live and we will continue to be on the forefront of all of the areas you are studying in ocean science, ocean policy, and ocean industries. The recommendations of your Commission on the future direction of U.S. ocean policy will without question significantly affect our communities.

Fishing has been the heart and soul of Gloucester since its beginnings in the 1600's. As you know and have heard during your meetings this week, the pending issues in the area of fisheries management presently are causing dramatic economic impacts in fishing communities such as Gloucester. Most likely, the worst is yet to come. The decision-making process for this issue has become unworkable and is resulting in actions serving no one.

The City of Gloucester has led in the formation of the Northeast Seafood Coalition, representing fishermen and seafood processors throughout the region. I currently serve as the Chairman of the Coalition. Through this group we are fully engaged in the deliberations on the current northeast

fishery management plan, as well as discussions regarding the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and it is not my intent to address specifics on that issue in this forum. However, as all-consuming as fishery management has been over the last six months, this by no means is our only interest in ocean policy.

We face a broad array of ocean policy issues in the day-to-day business of local government. While most of the policies and programs related to ocean resources and governance are defined at the state and federal - if not international - level, it is local communities which must deal with many of the regulatory requirements, as well as competing interests, with resulting impacts to our citizens, businesses and municipal budgets.

By way of illustration, over the past few months in Gloucester we have grappled with issues related to contaminated sediments and removal of dredged material; marine transportation, safety and navigation; ocean disposal of wastewater, including a waiver of secondary treatment and CSO discharges; the potential for aquaculture; management of shellfish resources; the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary; port security; recreational boating and fishing; habitat restoration; state regulations governing allowable uses along our waterfront; and a potential ocean energy generation facility. Asked recently whether we had a position on global warming, sea level rise, and alteration of ocean currents, we could only pause to realize how worried we should be at the prospect, as a community economically dependent on marine resources whose abundance and distribution must be tied to such major ocean processes. And this list of concerns is on top of the attention we pay to national and regional fisheries management.

We do receive assistance and resources from our partners at the state and federal level. The Commonwealth is committed to supporting its industrial harbors. Agency staff members are generous with their time and knowledge. Our state and federal elected officials are more than responsive to our needs and interests. As a small community of 30,000 residents, we could not begin to deal effectively with these issues without their support.

It also is true that it is the local community which benefits from the resources and opportunities presented by the oceans. There is no better example than Gloucester of a community enriched by the benefits of our location on the ocean. However, as more and more people desire to live near and benefit from those resources, and as everyone becomes more knowledgeable about the complexity of marine systems, it becomes more and more difficult to effectively balance the competing demands and interests. We constantly have need for more and better access to up-to-date scientific information and analysis. We need this, not only to participate meaningfully and constructively in the national debate about national resources, but also to help us make the best decisions affecting resources in Gloucester.

We recognize and applaud the important work you are doing. We share your goal of having workable, fair, responsive national ocean policies, reflecting current capabilities in science and technology. Your task is enormous. We ask that your Commission include us, or representatives of coastal communities, as you formulate and review your recommendations. We will be directly affected. We do have insight into the needs and capabilities of local communities and local governments. We hope we could contribute to your efforts.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office at 978 281-9700 or jbell@ci.gloucester.ma.us if we can provide any information or assistance.