

June 14, 2002

Dear U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy,

I request you develop an Ocean Restoration Policy. I also request you explore the possibilities of extending the opportunities to preserve U.S. territory/land as Wilderness - to off shore.

I grew up walking along the beach in Southern California. When I got my open water diving certificate, I did so off the coast in Los Angeles. Not only did I find debris and materials that could seriously harm wildlife, to the west was a deep valley so wild and unknown it scared the living daylights out of me. It was the biggest thrill to know I was next to a wilderness SO wild, that very few people ever witness it, and NO one can camp out there. It belongs to the wildlife. I can't go back in time and tag along with Lewis and Clark. My western frontier is underwater and you have an opportunity to help maintain, preserve, and sustain that frontier.

Unfortunately, though wildlife reside there, our policies continue to disregard it as habitat and instead look at it as an infinite pool for resource extraction. As we've seen far too many times, you can't maintain a healthy crop without giving back to the land and nurturing the soil. Your ocean policy must be strongly worded to work towards sustainability over the long term (200 years and on), focusing not on healthy industry, but on healthy ecosystems (industry will follow only with a healthy ecosystem!).

I heard on NPR today that NMFS is in a bit of a cunundrum. "How do we propose an ocean restoration policy to the Bush administration without it falling on deaf ears?" you say. The answer: You propose it with courage and conviction and a strong sense of civil duty - because you know that it is essential to healthy oceans. THAT is why you got into the careers you're in. You didn't get into them because you want to pillage our oceans. I'll bet a hundred bucks that over half of NMFS employees are divers and over half of NMFS employees are fly/sportfisherman. You know how important this is. You've worked your whole lives towards understanding oceans. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today and create a strong policy that promotes ocean restoration! If the Bush administration doesn't bite -approach Congress!

Healthy oceans mean healthy fish populations, healthy fisheries, healthy wildlife that feed on fish, healthy tourism that watches that wildlife, healthy sportfishing industry that thrives on those healthy fisheries - a healthy ecosystem for a healthy America.

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