

**Public Comments on the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's
Preliminary Report**

Topic Area: Regional Approach

Comments Submitted by:

- Jorge E. Corredor, University of Puerto Rico
- Megan E. Hollingsworth, Bloomington, Indiana

Comment Submitted by Jorge E. Corredor, Ph.D., University of Puerto Rico

Sir:

This is to apologize for inaccuracies in my message to the commission dated May 13 and copied below. In re-reading the Preliminary Report and my comment it is clear that, in the report, the Gulf of Mexico is treated as a region distinct from the Southeast Region. My comments regarding the differences between the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico are thus not pertinent. Nevertheless, my position regarding the differences between the Southeast region and the Caribbean remains unchanged. While the Caribbean ecosystem shares many features with those of the Florida Keys and South Florida, ecological connectivity between these far flung regions is weak. Moreover, the northern limit of tropical coastal ecosystems is in the vicinity of Miami and the vast region extending north from there to Cape Hatteras is classified by Longhurst as a part of the Northwest Atlantic Shelves Province with distinct fauna, flora and ecological composition. On both counts, sound "ecosystem-based management" would require a clear distinction between the eastern Caribbean and the northeastern continental seaboard. I urge the Commission to reassess its conclusions regarding this topic.

Jorge E. Corredor, Ph.D.
Professor of Chemical Oceanography
University of Puerto Rico
Department of Marine Sciences

-----Original Message-----

From: Jorge Corredor
Sent: Thursday, May 13, 2004 4:11 PM
To: 'comments@oceancommission.gov'
Subject: Public Comment on Preliminary Report

Sir:

The document entitled "Preliminary Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy – Governor's Draft" discusses the "spatial scale on which regional ocean information programs should be developed" and goes on to indicate that the "*Southeast region*" should comprise Florida's Atlantic coast including the Florida Keys, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina to south of Cape Hatteras.

I submit that such geographic coverage conflicts with the Commission's stated interest in "ecosystem based management". In particular the marine ecosystems of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are substantially different from those of the Gulf of Mexico and the coasts of Georgia, South and North Carolina. Longhurst, in his "Ecological Geography of the Sea" notes that the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico are "rather dissimilar in their production processes" and "it would be quite logical to consider (them) two different provinces". Longhurst goes on to indicate that he considers them together only as a matter of convenience. Moreover, the eastern Caribbean is geographically far removed from the U.S. mainland and management priorities for Caribbean ecosystems are very different from those of the coastal mainland states. For example, a prime concern for the Gulf of Mexico is the role of offshore oil-related activities while there is no such concern in the northeastern Caribbean region.

Interest exists for the establishment of a regional association for the operation and management of a regional coastal ocean observing system (COOS) to comprise Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Navassa (off the coast of Haiti). With the assistance of OCEAN.US, preliminary activities are now underway to assess the degree of interest in such an initiative and to identify stakeholders in the region.

Recognition on the part of the Commission of the need for a COOS specifically targeted to the Caribbean region would reaffirm its commitment to ecosystem based management.

Sincerely,

Jorge E. Corredor, Ph.D.
Professor of Chemical Oceanography
University of Puerto Rico
Department of Marine Sciences

Comment Submitted Megan E. Hollingsworth, Bloomington, Indiana

Megan E. Hollingsworth
Bloomington, Indiana

May 20, 2004

Public Comment on Preliminary Report
US Commission on Ocean Policy
1120 20th Street, NW
Suite 200 North
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in response to the release of the Preliminary Report on the Oceans. First, allow me to thank the Commission for all of the time, energy and resources it took to put the report together. Though I have not had the opportunity to read the Report in its entirety for lack of a hard copy, I do have a sense of what it takes to pull such a document together. I am encouraged that the U.S. Government has chosen to do so. I pray that we will now implement the recommendations made by the Commission.

My first request is for the public comment period to be extended. While I am uncertain of the schedule the Commission intends to adhere to, I am concerned that the majority of the people are unaware of their ability to submit a comment. I have heard no public mention of the comment period. I feel that this document deserves much more attention in the public eye and hope that the Commission will make every effort to ensure that people are informed.

In regards to "Advancing a Regional Approach" (Chapter 5) and specifically Recommendation 5-4, I suggest the Recommendation be amended to include a requirement for environmental impact statements for land use activities in *all* regions take into account the impact of these land use activities on the oceans and/or Great Lakes. Living in the Midwest, it is clear to me that activities here impact life in the oceans. I believe we should determine necessary changes in city planning, commercial development, industry, forest management, agricultural practices and road projects, so that these changes can be implemented without delay.

I am also curious as to why all of the States in the Union are not included in the regions that have been designated by the Commission. Please explain to me the logic behind this, as it is my understanding that activities throughout the continent have an impact on the waters.

In August 2004, I will begin a masters program in public health education at Indiana University, during which I intend to emphasize human dependence on ecological health. In particular, my research and study will address water quality. I am very interested in serving as a member of the regional ocean council for the Great Lakes region. Please contact me regarding how I may proceed with this interest.

Following is a letter that I have submitted to local and regional newspapers in regards to the announcement of the Preliminary Report on the Oceans. I am discouraged that I have not heard any further mention of the Preliminary Report since an article that appeared in the April 21st edition of the Chicago Tribune. I pray that President Bush and the Administration will listen to the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and encourage communities across the Nation to consider how our activities impact the health of the waters and, thus, the health of the people.

This should be a concern that is addressed by all as we near the 2004 elections. We cannot afford to ignore the findings documented in the Preliminary Report. Again, thank you for your work. Please be in touch.

Sincerely,

Megan E. Hollingsworth

April 22, 2004

Troubled Waters

In light of a report recently released by the US Commission on Ocean Policy, I pray that we will look carefully at our actions as individuals and as a community. The basic sum of the report is that the oceans are in big trouble, that the oceans are dying. It is difficult to grasp what this means for a living planet whose life began in the waters. I hope that we will take this opportunity to reconsider road projects, farming practices, and development of green space, as the accumulation of pollutants from activities in the heartland have been cited as playing a major role in the degradation of life in the oceans. I am in favor of a healthy economy, and believe that a healthy human economy is dependent upon a healthy Earth economy. I pray this report will wake us to the fact that the Earth economy is finite. We are at a crossroads. We can choose to make adjustments necessary to stop pollution and mend damage already incurred. While this means major change for all of us, I believe the alternative will bring change on a scale we cannot now comprehend.

Megan E. Hollingsworth