

**Public Testimony of Eli Weissman  
Ocean Governance Program Manager  
The Ocean Conservancy  
Before the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy**

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Hello my name is Eli Weissman and I manage the Ocean Governance Program at The Ocean Conservancy, formerly the Center for Marine Conservation. With over 120,000 members, The Ocean Conservancy strives to be the world's foremost advocate for the oceans. Through science-based advocacy, research, and public education, we inform, inspire and empower people to speak and act for the oceans

On behalf of The Ocean Conservancy, I would like to congratulate you on your appointments to this timely commission, especially Admiral Watkins on becoming Chairman. Your work over the next 18 months will help shape our ocean policy for the next 30 years.

As a lead organization, The Ocean Conservancy successfully fought for 3 years to secure the passage of the Oceans Act. We truly understand the intent of the legislation:

- To make recommendations for a coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy;
- Specifically a policy that promotes the "protection of the marine environment and prevention of marine pollution"; and
- To provide responsible stewardship of our ocean and coastal resources.

The reason The Ocean Conservancy so strongly supported the Oceans Act is because our oceans are in crisis. Last year there were over 11,270 beach closings and advisories around the country because of pollution. According to the National Marine Fisheries Service, more than 40% of assessed fish populations are overfished, and of those stocks, 57 are still being overfished. Numerous species of marine mammals, sea turtles and seabirds are on the endangered species list with causes ranging from entanglements in fishing gear, to collisions with boats and ships, to loss of important habitat due to human activities such as shoreline development. To address these and other critical issues facing our oceans, it is essential that the Commission act now to identify and promote environmentally sound management practices.

As many of you know, the marine conservation community was extremely disappointed when not a single member of our community was appointed to this Commission. We urge you to keep the protection of the marine environment at the forefront of your agenda, as stated in the Oceans Act. I was pleased this morning at the addition of a Stewardship Committee and have been encouraged at the willingness of the Chair and others to work with us.

The Ocean Conservancy stands ready to work with the Commission and we call upon you to open a dialogue with us and others in our community. Stakeholder involvement and support is essential in order to develop and implement recommendations for a responsible national ocean policy. With the help of this commission, The Ocean Conservancy is hopeful that together we can take the proper steps to protect these great resources for generations to come. We simply cannot wait another 30 years to better protect our oceans. Thank you.