



*THE BRIEFING ROOM*

**THE WHITE HOUSE**

Office of the Press Secretary

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For Immediate Release

June 12, 2009

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES**

**SUBJECT: NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE OCEANS, OUR COASTS, AND THE GREAT LAKES**

The oceans, our coasts, and the Great Lakes provide jobs, food, energy resources, ecological services, recreation, and tourism opportunities, and play critical roles in our Nation's transportation, economy, and trade, as well as the global mobility of our Armed Forces and the maintenance of international peace and security. We have a stewardship responsibility to maintain healthy, resilient, and sustainable oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes resources for the benefit of this and future generations.

Yet, the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes are subject to substantial pressures and face significant environmental challenges. Challenges include water pollution and degraded coastal water quality caused by industrial and commercial activities both onshore and offshore, habitat loss, fishing impacts, invasive species, disease, rising sea levels, and ocean acidification. Oceans both influence and are affected by climate change. They not only affect climate processes but they are also under stress from the impacts of climate change. Renewable energy, shipping, and aquaculture are also expected to place growing demands on ocean and Great Lakes resources. These resources therefore require protection through the numerous Federal, State, and local authorities with responsibility and jurisdiction over the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

To succeed in protecting the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, the United States needs to act within a unifying framework under a clear national policy, including a comprehensive, ecosystem-based framework for the longterm conservation and use of our resources.

In order to better meet our Nation's stewardship responsibilities for the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, there is established an Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force (Task Force), to be led by the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality. The Task Force shall be composed of senior policy-level officials from the executive departments, agencies, and offices represented on the Committee on Ocean Policy established by section 3 of Executive Order 13366 of December 17, 2004. This Task Force is not meant to duplicate that structure, but rather is intended to be a temporary entity with the following responsibilities:

1. Within 90 days from the date of this memorandum, the Task Force shall develop recommendations that include:

- a. A national policy that ensures the protection, maintenance, and restoration of the health of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources, enhances the sustainability of ocean and coastal economies, preserves our maritime heritage, provides for adaptive management to enhance our understanding of and capacity to respond to climate change, and is coordinated with our national security and foreign policy interests. The recommendations should prioritize upholding our stewardship responsibilities and ensuring accountability for all of our actions affecting ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources, and be consistent with international law, including customary international law as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- b. A United States framework for policy coordination of efforts to improve stewardship of the oceans, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. The Task Force should review the Federal Government's existing policy coordination framework to ensure integration and collaboration across jurisdictional lines in meeting the objectives of a national policy for the oceans, our coasts, and the Great Lakes. This will include coordination with the work of the National Security Council and Homeland Security Council as they formulate and coordinate policy involving national and homeland security, including maritime security. The framework should also address specific recommendations to improve coordination and collaboration among Federal, State, tribal, and local authorities, including regional governance structures.
- c. An implementation strategy that identifies and prioritizes a set of objectives the United States should pursue to meet the objectives of a national policy for the oceans, our coasts, and the Great Lakes.

2. Within 180 days from the date of this memorandum, the Task Force shall develop, with appropriate public input, a recommended framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning. This framework should be a comprehensive, integrated, ecosystem-based approach that addresses conservation, economic activity, user conflict, and sustainable use of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources consistent with international law, including customary international law as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

3. The Task Force shall terminate upon the completion of its duties.

The Task Force's recommendations and frameworks should be cost effective and improve coordination across Federal agencies.

This memorandum covers matters involving the oceans, the Great Lakes, the coasts of the United States (including its territories and possessions), and related seabed, subsoil, and living and non-living resources.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person. Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, regulatory, and legislative proposals.

The Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.

BARACK OBAMA

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For Immediate Release

June 12, 2009

**NATIONAL OCEANS MONTH, 2009**

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**BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**A PROCLAMATION**

Oceans are the Earth's dominant feature. They cover more than 70 percent of the planet's surface and affect our lives in a variety of ways. This month we celebrate the wonder of the oceans, and we commit to protecting and sustaining them for current and future generations.

The oceans are critical to supporting life. From the abyssal plains of the Pacific to the shallow coral reefs and seagrass beds of the Florida Keys, oceans support an incredible diversity of marine life and ecosystems. The base of the oceanic ecosystem provides most of the oxygen we breathe, so oceans are critical to our survival. These bodies of water also drive weather patterns and affect climate.

Our Nation's economy relies heavily on the oceans. Goods and services are transported across them constantly. They support countless jobs in an array of industries, including fishing, tourism, and energy. The economies of entire regions depend on the oceans.

The United States has been a leader in exploring and protecting this critical resource. We have gained new insights into the ocean ecosystems through research and monitoring. We have promoted innovative conservation efforts, such as setting aside special areas as national marine sanctuaries. We have also reduced overfishing, made great strides in reducing coastal pollution, and helped restore endangered species and degraded habitats.

My Administration continues to build upon this progress, and we are taking a more integrated and comprehensive approach to developing a national ocean policy that will guide us well into the future. This policy will incorporate ecosystem-based science and management and emphasize our public stewardship responsibilities. My Administration also is working to develop a systematic marine spatial planning framework for the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources. I am committed to protecting these resources and ensuring accountability for actions that affect them.

During National Oceans Month, we celebrate these vast spaces and the myriad ways they sustain life. We also pledge to preserve them and commend all those who are engaged in efforts to meet this end.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2009 as National Oceans Month. I call upon all Americans to learn more about the oceans and what can be done to conserve them.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of June, in the year of our Lord two thousand nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

BARACK OBAMA

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