

June 10, 2011

The Honorable Olympia J. Snowe
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Snowe,

We are writing on behalf of the thousands of our members in Maine to urge you to support the full implementation of the National Ocean Policy. As Congress develops the FY 2012 appropriations bill, we specifically urge you to support full funding for implementation of the National Ocean Policy as requested in the President's Budget for FY 2012. The President's request includes \$6.77 million for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning, \$1 million for Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping, and \$20 million for a Regional Ocean Partnership (ROPs) competitive grant program. This funding will provide the resources necessary to start the creation of a plan for the future of New England's ocean that promotes the development of new marine industries such as offshore wind, maintains existing uses and protects and restores the rich ecosystems, ocean wildlife and special places in the Gulf of Maine.

When President Obama established the National Ocean Policy through an Executive Order in July of 2010, stakeholder involvement and inter-governmental cooperation were designed as foundational components. Building on decades of work by two national ocean commissions, Congress, various state initiatives, and a year of public dialogue and input from stakeholders around the Nation, the Executive Order establishes an interagency National Ocean Council (NOC) to strengthen ocean governance and coordination of activities across 25 federal departments, agencies, and offices that address marine and coastal issues. The Executive Order also provides for the creation of regional planning bodies which are essentially partnerships of federal agencies, state governments and tribes that will build on existing regional efforts and will develop coastal and marine spatial plans to help guide ocean development in sensible ways.

As both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the state of Rhode Island have shown with their successful ocean management plans for state waters and the state of Maine's Ocean Energy Task Force has had success in identifying low conflict, high value areas for wind energy pilot projects, a regional coastal and marine plan for the Northeast would create a productive forum for coordination of current uses and the assurance that ocean users and industries desire to plan future activities. The health and sustainable use of Maine's coasts, rivers and ocean waters are no less vital to Maine's coastal communities or to New England as a region. The people and industries of Maine will provide an important voice in developing a region-wide coastal and marine management plan.

While NOAA has begun to implement the National Ocean Policy using its existing resources, additional funds will be necessary to fulfill the goals of the National Ocean Policy. The President's FY 2012 budget request would enable NOAA to conduct important mapping activities and develop agency capability to support comprehensive coastal and marine spatial

planning. The \$20 million competitive grants program would support the regional ocean partnerships' development and implementation of priority actions, including the development of regional coastal and marine spatial plans. In New England, the Northeast Regional Ocean Council and a number of states are ready to make immediate use of these funds. This regional plan would fully integrate existing state plans, would be designed with input from all ocean stakeholders, and would proactively assess the needs of New England's offshore renewable energy industry in the context of other ocean uses and environmental stewardship. The proposed funding would go through a competitive grants program in which New England is well positioned to compete.

We thank you for working to secure New England's position as a national leader in sustainable ocean use and stewardship. We look forward to discussing the National Ocean Policy in detail with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

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