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PRESS STATEMENT FROM: The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative

**JOINT OCEAN COMMISSION INITIATIVE WELCOMES PRESIDENT BUSH'S
REMARKS ON U.S. OCEAN ACTION PLAN**

September 25, 2008 (Washington, D.C.) – On Friday, September 26, President Bush will discuss the Administration's progress implementing its U.S. Ocean Action Plan. The Plan was released in December 2004, in response to reports issued by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission.

In his remarks, we hope the President will highlight the major issues affecting ocean and coastal communities and focus on key steps needed to address them, including establishing a comprehensive national ocean policy, increasing investments in ocean science, and securing the country's economic and national security through U.S. accession to the Law of the Sea Convention.

The Action Plan acknowledged the enormous economic and ecological value of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, and proposed measures to address challenges identified in the two reports. The Administration's efforts to implement the Action Plan over the last four years have been instrumental in elevating public and political awareness of the challenges facing our oceans and have laid a foundation for the next Administration to take an aggressive approach to curbing the continuing deterioration of our oceans.

"Our oceans undeniably contribute an immeasurable amount to our country's economy, health, environment and well-being," said the Honorable Leon Panetta, co-chair of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative. "We depend upon, and are intrinsically connected to, our oceans and coasts, yet they are in crisis due to climate change, pollution, overfishing and contamination. I recognize the administration's valuable efforts in this area, and anticipate that the President will stress the need for increased attention and funding to oceans moving forward."

"We cannot overstate the crisis facing our oceans," said Admiral James D. Watkins (U.S. Navy, Ret.), co-chair of the Joint Initiative. "The impacts of climate change on coastal economies and marine ecosystems are already occurring, as evidenced by record melting of Arctic sea ice and the acidification of global ocean waters. These threats are continuing to grow and must be addressed aggressively and immediately."

While the progress made by President Bush and his Administration is a good start, it is clear that much more effort is necessary to address the state of crisis facing our oceans. It will require new management approaches that bring together resources and experts from across the public and private sectors, additional funding to significantly improve our understanding of the ocean's role in climate change and its impact on our economy and ecosystems, and a recommitment to advancing U.S. leadership in international ocean policy. Without success in these areas, our oceans will continue to deteriorate and the country's safety, economy, environment and well-being will be jeopardized.

For more information on the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and our work, please visit www.jointoceancommission.org.

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The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission to catalyze ocean policy reform. The Joint Initiative is guided by a ten-member task force, five from each commission, and led by Admiral James D. Watkins (U.S. Navy, Ret.) and the Honorable Leon E. Panetta, chairs of the U.S. Commission and Pew Commission, respectively. The primary goal of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is to accelerate the pace of change that results in meaningful ocean policy reform.