

Co-Chairs

The Honorable
Norman Mineta

The Honorable
Christine Todd Whitman

Members

Maite Arce

Frances Beinecke

Donald Boesch, Ph.D.

The Honorable
Norman Dicks

Quenton Dokken, Ph.D.

Robert Gagosian, Ph.D.

Sherri Goodman

Scott Gudes

Vice Admiral
Conrad Lautenbacher,
Ph.D. U.S. Navy (Retired)

Margaret Leinen, Ph.D.

Julie Packard

The Honorable
Leon Panetta

John Pappalardo

The Honorable
Pietro Parravano

Andrew Rosenberg, Ph.D.

Paul Sandifer, Ph.D.

Queen Quet

October 28, 2021

Dear President Biden,

Your Administration has a rare opportunity to secure the future of America's oceans and protect the country from some of the worst ravages of a changing climate.

The Joint Ocean Commission [Initiative](#) (JOCI) stands ready to assist you as you move toward swift implementation of essential ocean provisions in several of your initiatives to date. These include the American Jobs Plan, executive orders on climate and conservation, your unwavering support for oceans in the bipartisan infrastructure bill and a reconciliation package, as well as visionary U.S. Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Accord. JOCI is composed of bipartisan ocean leaders, including members of the Pew Oceans Commission and the US Commission on Ocean Policy. Both commissions spent three years initiating a national dialogue about ocean policy, and recommendations were submitted to Congress as a blueprint for a national ocean policy. We recently had an insightful and productive discussion on the importance of the ocean-climate nexus with two of your very capable assistants, Chair Brenda Mallory of CEQ, and Dr. Jane Lubchenco of OSTP.

Rarely have we seen a convergence of resources and leadership that can empower the country and lead the world to equitably confront the existential challenge of climate change, including its dramatic impact on our oceans. Your administration has powerful tools in both the newly codified Ocean Policy Committee, as well as the National Climate Task Force. Significant resources are included in the Senate-approved Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, including nearly a half billion dollars for the National Ocean and Coastal Security Fund, \$491 million for NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program, as well as funding for port infrastructure and electrification, promotion of ocean renewable energy development, mapping, coastal flood control, protecting vulnerable communities, etc.

Building on all these important investments, we encourage the Administration to dispatch, develop, and implement a whole-of-government ocean-climate action plan. This can serve as a blueprint for achieving US goals in the NDC and demonstrate US leadership in how to equitably and justly support America's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes economies and the jobs and communities on which our nation depends, including those historically underserved. Deputy OSTP Director Dr. Jane Lubchenco, a former leader of JOCI, has done extensive work quantifying and evaluating the potential for ocean-based climate actions to significantly reduce emissions, outlining a "no-regrets-to-do list" that could be set in motion today.

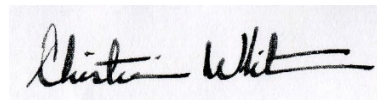
Our oceans and coasts are vital to our nation's economy and security. Oceans are the engines of our planet's weather and climate systems. It is hard to imagine a better return on investment than securing the health and future of our oceans in a just and equitable manner.

As you have clearly articulated, the global climate crisis presents enormous opportunities for US leadership and job creation that can result in economic growth and a safer, more sustainable planet. Oceans can play a central and powerful role in forging a new pathway to a low-carbon, climate resilient future. They are also the foundation for growing the blue economy, which is expected to grow at twice the rate of the overall economy.

We laud you for the vision you have demonstrated by making oceans part and parcel of your address to the climate crisis. We urge you to translate these provisions into an actionable, enforceable, equitable and all-of- government ocean action plan that your administration can readily adopt to harness the ability of the ocean to reduce emissions, address poverty and inequity, and promote coastal resilience, peace, and security,

We applaud your accomplishments in this arena so far. We greatly look forward to working with your administration to complete the task in the short window of opportunity available to us.

Sincerely,



Christine Todd Whitman
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative



Norman Y. Mineta
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative



Leon Panetta, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative

Cc:

Chair Gina McCarthy, National Climate Task Force
Chair Brenda Mallory, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Dr. Eric Lander, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Deputy Director for Climate and Environment, OSTP
Secretary Deb Haaland, Department of Interior
Secretary Jennifer Granholm, Department of Energy
Secretary Gina Raimondo, Department of Commerce
Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Department of Transportation
Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, Department of State
Dr. Rick Spinrad, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator