

#### *Co-Chairs*

The Honorable  
Norman Mineta  
The Honorable  
Christine Todd Whitman

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema, U.S. Senate  
The Honorable Joe Manchin, U.S. Senate  
United States Senate  
Washington DC 20510

October 28, 2021

#### *Members*

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Paul Sandifer, Ph.D.  
Queen Quet

Dear Senator Sinema and Senator Manchin:

As you evaluate strategies to revive and stabilize the economy and invest in a prosperous and sustainable future for all Americans, we want to highlight the central role of oceans and coasts in helping you achieve these ends.

We are leaders of the Joint Ocean Commission [Initiative](#) (JOCI) and we know the importance of protecting and stewarding our oceans and Great Lakes. 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. Our oceans and coasts traditionally serve as the lifeblood of American communities from the Arctic to the Gulf of Mexico, creating economic opportunity and generating prosperity. The ocean economy supports millions of American jobs across a wide range of industries. According to a recent [report](#) from NOAA, in 2019 the marine economy grew faster than the US overall and contributed about \$397 billion to the GDP. With the right federal investments, this vital economic engine can hold the key to both economic recovery and enhanced resilience for the future.

As you consider the reconciliation package it is vital that we recognize the importance and power of the ocean-climate nexus to address climate mitigation, resilience, and justice. Indeed, the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy has [identified](#) how oceans can deliver more than 20% of the annual greenhouse gas emission cuts needed to limit global temperature rise through concerted actions on renewable energy, shipping, restoration of marine ecosystems, fisheries, and aquaculture.

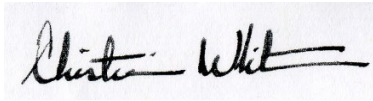
While many tradeoffs will likely be considered in the coming weeks, we must not sacrifice the importance of game changing investments in coastal infrastructure and restoration; supporting American seafood; advancing ocean science; accelerating a low-carbon blue economy; and preserving healthy ecosystems as the foundation for a healthy ocean economy.

As we recover from one of the greatest challenges to the American economy in a lifetime and invest in a sustainable future for our citizens, America's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes are poised, with significant federal support, to expeditiously provide critical goods and services, sustain vital livelihoods and cultures, support a just transition to a clean energy economy, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

We urge you to consider these important priorities in the reconciliation package. There is an opportunity not only to help coastal communities but to lead and shape the future of coastal economies in a sustainable, profitable way. Thank you for

dedication and all you are doing to facilitate a vibrant economic recovery of the country and secure prosperity for generations to come. We and the JOCI Leadership Council stand ready to assist.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Whitman", with a stylized, sweeping underline.

Christine Todd Whitman  
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Norman Y. Mineta", with a stylized, sweeping underline.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leon Panetta", with a stylized, sweeping underline.

Leon Panetta, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative