Kelly Hepler, Chair National Fish
Habitat Board Alaska Dept. of Fish &
Game 333 Raspberry Rd Anchorage,
AK 99518-1599

Dear Kelly:

On behalf of the Coastal Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHPs), we request that the National Fish Habitat Board send a letter to the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, raising awareness of the role the FHPs in achieving National Ocean Policy goals and lending support to their recent report, *Charting the Course: Securing the Future of America's Oceans*.

Recommendations 1.1 and 1.3 of the report, noted under Actions One and Three, are as follows:

- **Action One: Enhance the resiliency of coastal communities and ocean ecosystems to dramatic changes underway in our oceans and on our coasts**

  Recommendation 1.1 articulates that the Administration and Congress should boost funding and support for programs that protect and restore critical coastal features, such as wetlands, dune systems, mangroves, salt marshes, seagrass beds, and coral reefs, all of which provide valuable services, including buffering against storm surges, purifying water, providing habitat for important species, and offering recreational opportunities.

- **Action Three: Support state and regional ocean and coastal priorities**

  Recommendation 3.1 articulates that the Administration and Congress should strongly support multi-state regional ocean partnerships that coordinate data and decision making across jurisdictions, make progress on shared priorities, and more effectively engage ocean and coastal stakeholders. This will allow states to build on current progress toward improved decision-making about coastal and ocean resources and priority economic drivers.

Should Congress or the Administration advance these recommendations, our coastal FHPs and/or our individual partners could receive increased funding for both on-the-ground restoration projects and operations.

We propose that the Coastal FHPs be considered as agents in implementing these two recommendations, in partnership with state and federal agencies, and other organizations. As you know, the Coastal FHPs have catalyzed Federal, State, conservation organizations, Tribes, and local support to conduct scientific research including fish habitat assessments; secure, leverage, and distribute resources for on-the-ground coastal fish habitat restoration projects; coordinate the communication and sharing of information; and develop decision support tools and strategic planning documents. With a proven track record of advancing coastal fish habitat conservation, we are well qualified to effectively and successfully implement these particular recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Lisa DeBruyckere, Coordinator Pacific Marine and Estuarine FHP and California Fish Passage Forum
Scott Robinson, Coordinator, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership
Gordon Smith, Coordinator Hawaii FHP
Glen Elison, Southwest Alaska Salmon FHP
Jessica Speed, Mat-Su Basin FHP
Robert Ruffner, Kenai Peninsula FHP
Debbie Hart, Southeast Alaska FHP
Robin Knox, Coordinator Western Native Trout Initiative
Emily Greene, Coordinator Atlantic Coastal FHP

Please note that this proposed action and letter is currently under review by the Coastal Fish Habitat Partnerships.

DRAFT

Mr. William Ruckelshaus and Mr. Norman Mineta, Co-Chairs Joint Ocean
Commission Initiative
The Meridian Institute
1920 L Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC
20036

Co-Chairs Ruckelshaus and Mineta:

On behalf of the National Fish Habitat Partnership, I would like to commend the Commission for its work catalyzing ocean policy reform and action at the national, regional, state and, and local levels and would like to lend its support of your recently published report, *Charting the Course: Securing the Future of America's Oceans*. Of particular interest and Coastal FHP alignment are Recommendation 1.1 and Recommendation 1.3, noted under Actions One and Three, as follows:

- **Action One: Enhance the resiliency of coastal communities and ocean ecosystems to dramatic changes underway in our oceans and on our coasts**

  Recommendation 1.1 articulates that the Administration and Congress should boost funding and support for programs that protect and restore critical coastal features, such as wetlands, dune systems, mangroves, salt marshes, seagrass beds, and coral reefs, all of which provide valuable services, including buffering against storm surges, purifying water, providing habitat for important species, and offering recreational opportunities.

- **Action Three: Support state and regional ocean and coastal priorities**

  Recommendation 3.1 articulates that the Administration and Congress should strongly support multi-state regional ocean partnerships that coordinate data and decision making across jurisdictions, make progress on shared priorities, and more effectively engage ocean and coastal stakeholders. This will allow states to build on current progress toward improved decision-making about coastal and ocean resources and priority economic drivers.

We propose that the coastal Fish Habitat Partnerships be considered agents in implementing these recommendations, in partnership with state and federal agencies, and NOAA-recognized regional ocean partnerships.

A total of 10 of the 19 nationally recognized Fish Habitat Partnerships (FHP) help to protect, restore, and enhance fish habitats in coastal marine environments, including the Atlantic Coastal FHP, the Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, the Hawaii FHP, the Southwest Alaska Salmon FHP, theMat-Su Basin FHP, the Kenai Peninsula FHP, the Southeast Alaska FHP, the Western Native Trout Initiative, the California Fish Passage Forum, and the Pacific Marine and Estuarine FHP.

These Coastal FHPs have catalyzed Federal, State, conservation organizations, Tribes, and local support to conduct scientific research including fish habitat assessments; secure, leverage, and distribute resources for on-the-ground coastal fish habitat restoration projects; coordinate the communication and sharing of information; and develop decision support tools and strategic planning documents. With a proven track record of conducting multiple aspects of coastal fish habitat conservation, these FHPs are well qualified to effectively and successfully implement these particular recommendations.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Kelly Hepler, Chair
National Fish Habitat Partnership

Please note that this proposed action and letter is currently under review by the Coastal Fish Habitat Partnerships.

DRAFT