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Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Applauds Gulf State's Leadership on Gulf of Mexico's Ocean Reform

Governor's Reaffirm Commitment to Protect the Coast at August SGA Summer Meeting

Washington, DC – At the Southern Governor's Associations' Summer Meeting, the five Gulf State governors reaffirmed their commitment to the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (the Alliance) and its work to protect the waters and coastline of the Gulf of Mexico. The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative applauds the leadership of Governors Haley Barbour of Mississippi, Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana, Charlie Christ of Florida, Rick Perry of Texas, and Bob Riley of Alabama for their support of the Alliance and to continuing meaningful ocean policy reform in the Gulf.

"The Gulf of Mexico Alliance is key to protecting the Gulf of Mexico's most vital resources, and the Governors' leadership has been a vital component to its success," said Leon E. Panetta, co-chair of the Joint Initiative. "This unified front has demonstrated that the collaboration among the states has been a resounding success in promoting a healthy Gulf, and has proven to be a model for the rest of the nation," Panetta continued.

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance, established in 2005, is a partnership among the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas and the federal government to work together to protect the Gulf of Mexico. Since releasing its first action plan in March 2006, the Alliance has either completed or has in progress over 90% of the 70+actions in the Governors' plan, including making coastal communities more resilient to hurricanes, securing \$700 million to provide proper water and wastewater infrastructure in vulnerable coastal areas, establishing a Gulf of Mexico Environmental Education Network to change attitudes and behaviors of both residents and visitors, and working together to protect the Gulf's shared coastal waters from pollution.

"The Gulf States and the Alliance can state with certainty that they are walking the talk on a working together to ensure the long-term health of the Gulf of the Mexico," said Admiral James D. Watkins, co-chair of the Joint Initiative "They have successfully demonstrated that coordinated efforts among the states can yield tremendous opportunity for both economic growth and environmental health," Watkins continued.

Representing the diverse interests in protecting the Gulf of Mexico, the meeting was hosted by Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi and attended by Governors Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana, and Bob Riley of Alabama, and representatives from the offices of Governors Charlie Christ

of Florida and Rick Perry of Texas, as well as Senator Trent Lott (R-MS) and high level leadership from the White House Council on Environmental Quality, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of the Interior, Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Navy, the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, and state government agencies.

“The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is committed to advancing meaningful ocean policy reform throughout the nation and looks forward to continuing our work with the Governors and the Alliance to build on its successes and accelerate the pace of ocean policy reform,” Panetta said.

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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 Initiative is guided by a ten-member Task Force, five from each Commission, and led by Admiral James D. Watkins 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. For more information, visit www.jointoceancommission.org