



June 13, 2007

Senator Pam Resor
Representative Frank Smizik
Chairs, Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture
State House
Boston, MA 02133

RE: **S. 529**, the *Massachusetts Ocean Act*

Dear Chairwoman Resor and Chairman Smizik,

Our organizations urge you to act now to report favorably **S. 529**, the *Massachusetts Ocean Act*, from your committee for a vote on the Senate floor. This legislation calls for the development and implementation of an ocean management plan that would promote environmentally sustainable activities in Massachusetts waters, while protecting valuable marine resources. If enacted, this legislation would be the first of its kind in the United States.

Recent proposals for liquefied natural gas terminals, sand and gravel mining, desalinization plants, gas pipelines, telecommunications cables, and wind energy facilities have raised numerous concerns among citizens and local, state, and federal agencies about how to manage the diversity of uses and the impacts of this intensified development pressure on the marine ecosystem. Governance structures for ocean resources management have historically focused on single resources or activities. Public decisions about whether to allow certain activities have occurred through a case-by-case, reactive and fragmented approach. New legislation is needed to give public agencies clear direction and stronger authority for managing activities in a proactive manner.

The *Massachusetts Ocean Act* would bring the Bay State up to speed with private industry innovations and associated management challenges in our ocean waters. The bill would require the Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to develop and implement an ocean management plan to guide uses and activities in state waters.

A broad-based, 19-member ocean management advisory board, including state agency representatives, state legislators, a municipal official, and environmental, fishing, and marine industry stakeholders, would assist the Secretary in designing the ocean management plan. A separate 9-member ocean science advisory council, including marine scientists from academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies, would assist the Secretary in gathering and analyzing the best available scientific understanding of ocean resources. All agencies, departments, divisions, units, commissions, boards, and authorities of the Commonwealth would be required to administer programs, issue permits, and conduct all other activities in conformity with the applicable provisions of the ocean management plan. Guided by the best available scientific understanding of ocean resources and ecosystems, as provided through research, mapping, monitoring, and other data collection, state decision makers will be able to identify and capitalize on opportunities to encourage desirable development in locations that are well suited for it, while discouraging inappropriate and wasteful development that harms the marine ecosystem.

We urge you to seize this opportunity to lead the rest of the nation in crafting comprehensive ocean policy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Brooks
Director
Marine Conservation Program
Conservation Law Foundation

Jack Clarke
Director of Public Policy
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John Phillips
Director
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The Ocean Conservancy

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**Natural Resources Defense
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CC: Senate President Therese Murray