



Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition

NEWS RELEASE

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FLORIDA COASTAL AND OCEAN COALITION RELEASES: *FLORIDA'S COASTAL AND OCEAN FUTURE: AN UPDATED BLUEPRINT FOR ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP*

The Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition today released *Florida's Coastal and Ocean Future: An Updated Blueprint For Economic And Environmental Leadership* (hereafter "Blueprint Update"). This report addresses Florida's most challenging coastal and marine topics and recommends actions for protecting and preserving the future of Florida's coasts and oceans. It provides a road map for the public and policy makers on pressing environmental issues.

"This is a pivotal time for Florida, both in terms of its environment and economy. Events such as the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill and subsequent proposals for Gulf of Mexico restoration, election of new Florida leadership, and the fragile state of the nation's economy provide new opportunities and challenges for Florida's decision makers," said Janet Bowman, Director Legislative Policy and Strategies, Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy and a member of the Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition Steering Committee. "In order to create a sustainable Florida, we must make our environment a priority, which in turn will help boost our economy."


"In Florida, having abundant fish and wildlife, public access to beaches and state parks, and clean rivers, springs, bays, and oceans are a matter of economic survival," said Paul Johnson, speaking on behalf of Reef Relief, a member of the Coalition Steering Committee. "Coastal tourism and recreation are two of Florida's top ocean industries and both depend on healthy ecosystems," Mr. Johnson said

The Blueprint Update recommends actions for restoring the Gulf of Mexico by addressing many of the concerns that were prevalent before the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill and that received much needed focus following the spill. The report also addresses coastal policy and development, protecting marine ecosystems and wildlife, coastal water quality, and planning the future of our oceans and coasts.

"The Blueprint Update recognizes the interconnectedness of Florida's coastal and marine environments and recommends action for protecting the entire system," said Sarah Chasis, Director of the Ocean Initiative at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Sea Turtle Conservancy • Gulf Restoration Network • Indian Riverkeeper • Natural Resources Defense Council • Reef Relief • Surfrider Foundation • 1000 Friends of Florida • The Nature Conservancy • Conservancy of Southwest Florida

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Ericka Canales, Surfrider Foundation Florida Regional Manager said the Coalition's assessment and recommendations "highlight the lessons learned from the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill and recommends actions that will improve the restoration efforts and overall health of Florida's Gulf Coast."

"Shorelines are at risk from erosion since more than half of Florida's sandy beaches already designated as critically eroded. The time to reassess coastal policies is long overdue in order to protect our beaches and dunes for future Floridians" said Gary Appelson, Sea Turtle Conservancy Policy Director.

Janet Bowman, Director Legislative Policy and Strategies, Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy said "strategically targeted coastal land acquisition and habitat restoration are some of the best ways to protect Florida's remaining undeveloped coastal lands and increase the resiliency of Florida's natural, economic and social infrastructures. The Blueprint Update addresses and recommends actions for protecting Florida's economic and natural resources".

"Florida's aquatic preserves and the Coastal and Aquatic Managed Area Program of the Department of Environmental Protection are critically important to preserving essential marine nursery grounds for recreational and commercial fishing species. Through the Blueprint Update the Coalition addresses these issues and recommends continued funding for this pivotal program", said Paul Johnson, Reef Relief's Policy Director.

Jennifer Hecker, Director of Natural Resource Policy for the Conservancy of Southwest Florida stated that "the Florida Department of Environmental Protection should work with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to establish strong numeric nutrient pollution standards to protect and improve the health of Florida's water bodies, including coastal and estuarine ecosystems. This is a central issue to the health of Florida's coastal and marine environments."

Furthermore, The Legislature should encourage, not seek to preempt, local 'smart fertilizer' ordinances that regulate the use of nitrogen-based fertilizers. Preventing nutrient laden runoff from ever reaching coastal waters will improve the overall health of our entire coastline" said George Jones, Executive Director of the Indian Riverkeeper.

The Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition is a group of organizations working together to conserve, protect and restore Florida's coastal and marine environment. The Coalition emphasizes the implementation of an ecosystem-based approach to coastal and ocean management, as well as recognition of the important linkage between the health of Florida's economy and the health of its beaches and dunes, coral reefs, mangroves, sea grasses, wetlands and other natural resources. The Coalition calls on Florida's Governor, State Agencies, Cabinet, and Legislature for action and leadership to achieve the goal of healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems. Please visit the Florida Coastal and Ocean Coalition website for more information, www.flcoastalandocean.org.

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