



October 15, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of 118 organizations and businesses supportive of protecting and restoring America's ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes, we're grateful for the bold action your Administration has taken thus far to respond to the climate crisis--the greatest threat our planet faces. We appreciate your commitment to rapid decarbonization and your recognition that our ocean and Great Lakes offer important mitigation and adaptation opportunities as we seek to scale and broaden our solutions for reducing emissions. In order to make the most of these opportunities, we ask that your Administration design and implement an ambitious U.S. ocean climate action plan. This will support your commitments to reduce emissions and increase resilience while providing good jobs, protecting vulnerable communities, and safeguarding our natural resources. We stand ready to work with your Administration on this effort.

A 2020 [analysis](#) estimated that investments in ocean-based climate mitigation measures in the United States could reduce GHG emissions by up to 13.7 percent annually by 2050. Actions by your Administration to incorporate key ocean priorities in the Build Back Better agenda (including developing marine renewable energy, transitioning to zero-carbon shipping and port infrastructure, and restoring ecosystems); to establish a new U.S. Nationally Determined Contribution that recognizes the role of ocean-based solutions; and to establish a Climate Council at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, are important steps toward leveraging ocean-based climate mitigation as part of an all-of-government approach to addressing the climate crisis. However, much more remains to be done to ensure these commitments are implemented in ways that ensure actions are coordinated and have maximum positive impact on climate and ocean health and the economic well-being of communities.

Now is also the time to ensure federal agencies are working as one to deliver on the promise that ocean-based climate action represents while also achieving the Administration's priorities of equity and justice in our climate solutions. Fortunately, the Congressionally authorized Ocean Policy Committee (OPC), co-chaired by the Council on Environmental Quality and the Office of

Science and Technology Policy, was specifically designed to provide the agency coordination and collaboration that is required.

We urge the Administration to develop a U.S. ocean climate action plan as one element of your larger plan to reduce GHG emissions by 50-52 percent by 2030 and ensure a more resilient future. Building on the recommendations that your Administration has already put forward, this plan should ensure actions being taken across agencies are brought together to address issues including but not limited to:

- Accelerating the nation's rapid, just, and equitable transition from offshore oil and gas to offshore renewable energy. Coordinating these actions through the plan ensures that key stakeholders can participate and new energy development will not negatively impact other ocean-related goals. This includes facilitating more effective and holistic planning, development and implementation of marine renewable energy projects; and ensuring the offshore wind projects necessary to realize the Administration's 30GW goal are implemented in a timely, well-sited, and environmentally sensitive manner that supports good jobs and community development. This also includes ending new offshore oil and gas lease sales and preventing new oil and gas activity in any undeveloped areas.
- Implementing strategies for effective investment in coastal resilience and adaptation needs, with an emphasis on nature-based solutions. A positive initial step would be strengthening accounting for the multiple benefits provided by blue carbon ecosystems such as salt marshes, seagrass meadows, and mangroves, including the potential for their inclusion in national mitigation and adaptation goals. This should also include coordinated review of programs such as those under the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, the National Flood Insurance Program, and others that support preparedness for coastal flooding and strengthen coastal resilience.
- Implementing strategies for the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from domestic and international maritime transportation to realize the United States' goal of zero-carbon shipping by 2050, in coordination with efforts to reduce underwater noise emissions that are stressing the resilience of marine life. The plan should also include improving port infrastructure to allow for cold ironing and other portside incentives to reduce emissions; fleet upgrades; and development of alternative fuels as well as reducing harmful local pollution and providing good paying jobs.
- Implementing the national goal to conserve and protect at least 30% of land and ocean by 2030 and advancing the campaign to conserve and restore America the Beautiful. The Administration should designate marine protected areas and parks that provide for lasting protections of blue carbon and biodiversity; maximize their climate mitigation and

adaptation potential; and prioritize inclusion of and partnership with Tribes and Indigenous and local communities to ensure their perspectives and priorities are central to the decision-making process.

To ensure that leveraging the mitigation and adaptation potential of the ocean is successful for each of the above action areas, the ocean climate action plan should build on and accelerate action already underway while ensuring an inclusive, whole-of-government approach. The plan should include:

- Established goals for each of the action areas, with milestones and targets for achieving those goals;
- Identification of lead agencies and the other agencies that will work collaboratively with the lead agency to achieve the established goals;
- Identification and engagement of Tribes and key stakeholders, including States, civil society and the private sector;
- Specific steps that need to be taken to realize the climate benefits from each action area; and
- Potential barriers to success and strategies to overcome those barriers.

This plan should be created in support of the United States' long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategy, as committed to by Special Envoy Kerry. In this way, the plan would provide concrete implementation steps and identify gaps and needs for achieving the mitigation and resilience goals the Administration has already established, as well as engage key stakeholders. By creating a U.S. ocean climate action plan, the United States can also "lead by doing" internationally, allowing our domestic actions to rebuild our credibility while providing aid and technical assistance aimed at supporting rapid uptake of global solutions and equity for the most vulnerable nations.

Finally, we want to emphasize the critical need to center issues of equity and environmental justice in the development and implementation of ocean climate policies. As your Administration has recognized, economically disadvantaged communities and Indigenous and Tribal leadership have been marginalized for too long when it comes to decision-making related to climate change, despite the reality that these communities have borne the brunt of the negative health and economic ramifications of the climate crisis. We stand ready to support implementation of Justice40 in related programs and to ensure that these communities both help to create and benefit from new action related to U.S. ocean and coastal policies.

Once again, we thank you for the powerful steps you have taken thus far, your ongoing commitment to address the climate crisis, and your recognition that the ocean is crucial to that

effort. We look forward to partnering with you in the development and implementation of a U.S. ocean climate action plan that can make our goals a reality.

Sincerely,

350 Maine  
Adirondack Rockware  
Alaska Wilderness League  
Animal Welfare Institute  
Azul  
BeachNecessities.com  
Big Blue & You  
Blue Frontier  
Brown Girl Surf  
California Environmental Voters  
Californians for Western Wilderness  
Center for American Progress  
Center for the Blue Economy  
Cetacean Society International  
Conservation Voters of South Carolina  
Coral Vita  
Creation Justice Ministries  
Defenders of Wildlife  
EarthEcho International  
Earthjustice  
ECOS Communications  
Electric Auto Association of Central Coast California  
End Game Holdings  
Endangered Species Coalition  
Environment America  
Epic Water Filters  
Everyone's Collective  
Evolv Creative  
Friends of Casco Bay  
Friends of the Earth - US  
GreenLatinos  
Greenpeace USA

Gullah/Geechee Fishing Association  
Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition  
Healthy Ocean Coalition  
Hispanic Access Foundation  
Horry County Rising, Inc.  
Inland Ocean Coalition  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Alaska Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Arizona Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Buffalo Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Central Texas Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Colorado Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Colorado State University Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Great Lakes Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Illinois Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Montana Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - North Texas Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - University of Colorado Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - University of Michigan Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Utah Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Washington DC Chapter  
Inland Ocean Coalition - Wyoming Chapter  
International Fund for Animal Welfare  
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute  
Jasmine Garden Oasis  
Justice Outside  
League of Conservation Voters  
Lopez-Wagner Strategies  
Maine Conservation Voters  
Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network  
Mapleton Marketing Inc.  
Marine Conservation Institute  
Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket  
Meg Haywood Sullivan INC  
MHG Ocean Impact, LLC  
Mission Blue  
Monterey Bay Aquarium  
Mystic Aquarium  
Nassau Hiking & Outdoor Club  
National Aquarium  
National Ocean Protection Coalition

National Parks Conservation Association  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Northern Alaska Environmental Center  
NY4WHALES  
Ocean Conservancy  
Ocean Conservation Research  
Ocean Defense Initiative  
Ocean River Institute  
Oceana  
Oceanic Preservation Society  
Only One  
Operation Endangered Species  
Pacific Environment  
Patagonia  
Plastic Free Fridays  
Rachel Carson Council  
Rocky Mountain Resorts  
Rope Partner  
Sachamama  
SalmonState (Alaska)  
Save Our Shores  
Seattle Aquarium  
Seven Circles Foundation  
Sierra Club  
South Carolina Wildlife Federation  
Surfrider Foundation  
Susan Bruce Travel  
Swift and Harper Archaeological Resource Consulting  
TAO  
Terra Advocati  
The Brain and Behavior Clinic  
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation  
The Florida Aquarium  
The Ocean Foundation  
The Ocean Project  
The Receptionist  
The United Nations Foundation  
University of Colorado-Boulder  
Urban Ocean Lab  
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

Waste Reduction Advisory Committee  
Watershed Connections  
Whale and Dolphin Conservation  
Wild Wax Candle Company  
WILDCOAST  
World Surf League

CC:

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Transportation  
The Honorable Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of Energy  
The Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary of Interior  
The Honorable John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, Department of State  
The Honorable Dr. Eric Lander, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy  
The Honorable Brenda Mallory, Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality  
The Honorable Gina McCarthy, National Climate Advisor, National Climate Task Force  
The Honorable Gina Raimondo, Secretary of Commerce  
The Honorable Dr. Rick Spinrad, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere &  
NOAA Administrator