

[State of the Oceans](#) [\(pdf\)](#)

### **Congressman □ Farr on Ocean Policy**

Growing up on the Central Coast of California, on one of the most beautiful stretches of coastline in the world, I have had a lifelong love for the ocean. Throughout my career in public service, in both the California State Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives, I have consistently worked on behalf of the oceans-to protect them and to expand our understanding of them. I proudly represent Monterey Bay, which is part of the largest National Marine Sanctuary in the country, and the first White House Conference on the Oceans was held in my district in 1998.

We currently find ourselves with a historic opportunity. In recent years, two blue-ribbon commissions have described the state of our country's oceans. The Pew Oceans Commission released [its report](#) in June of 2003 and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (USCOP) made public its [final report](#) in September of 2004. Taken together, these documents create a vision for the future-a vision founded on responsible stewardship of our country's largest public trust resource.

As mandated in the Oceans Act of 2000-a bill based on legislation that I initially introduced-President Bush responded to the final report of the USCOP within 90 days of the report being released. Sadly, despite a prime opportunity to listen to the Commission he himself appointed and to provide critical leadership on an environmental issue, the president's response in his [U.S. Ocean Action Plan \(pdf\)](#) falls depressingly short. Now, more than a year later, the implementation of the USCOP recommendations continues to be slow or non-existent, which earned the Nation a grade of D+ on the [U.S. Ocean Policy Report Card](#) released by the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOCI).

Despite this lack of enthusiasm from President Bush and lack of action on Capitol Hill, I am moving forward and continuing to provide leadership here in Congress on protecting our oceans. Based on the Pew Oceans Commission report and the [preliminary report](#) of the U.S.

Commission on Ocean Policy (released April 2004), I worked with my three fellow House Oceans Caucus (HOC) co-chairs to write a bill that sets the framework for addressing many of the threats facing our oceans. In July 2004, we introduced the Oceans Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act (

[H.R. 4900](#)

). Once we moved into the 109th Congress, we introduced an amended version of OCEANS-21 (

[H.R. 2939](#)

) and gained two more co-chairs for HOC. I have also personally introduced multiple pieces of oceans-related legislation and fight for the funding and development of ocean activities and programs, especially as administered through the

[National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)

(NOAA).

Our world ocean is our most valuable resource and is an inherently wide-reaching, cross-cutting medium. Beyond its link to education, science/research, and general understanding and exploration, the ocean impacts human health, national security, climate variability/stability, the national economy, social dynamics, and more. For far too long, though, we have considered the ocean to be inexhaustible. Finally, we are starting to realize that we are pushing the marine and coastal resources to their very limit-irreparably so, for many of them. Despite this realization, we are, as a Nation, letting time continue to pass without making effective changes to slow or reverse this degradation. The time is now to make oceans a priority, and I do all in my power to keep it at the forefront!