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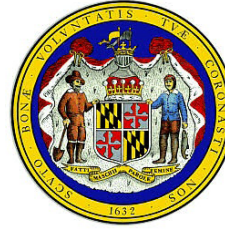
JO N S. CORZINE

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Virginia

Mid-Atlantic Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation

A Rising Tide of New Challenges

The ocean waters of the Mid-Atlantic, stretching from New York to Virginia, provide a wealth of economic and environmental services to local communities, States, and the nation. At the same time, the people of the Mid-Atlantic region are a significant force that influences our ocean and coastal environment. We change the coastline and watershed through our buildings and development, we harvest the ocean's resources through increasingly efficient means, and we rely on offshore waters to support diverse activities such as maritime commerce and recreation. As the intensity of these human influences has increased, they have at times led to significant threats to the health of our ecosystems.

Now our ocean and coastal resources face a new generation of challenges, and these challenges are only growing in their urgency. Volatile energy prices, a pressing need to embrace alternative energy development, and a growing public awareness of adverse climate change impacts have begun to fundamentally affect the way we view our coastal and offshore areas. Water quality impairments continue to have negative impacts on ecosystem function and limit the quality of life in our coastal communities. And increased activity and disturbances in offshore areas threaten sensitive and unique habitats and ocean features. The risks of failing to address these ocean and coastal problems are grave, with serious implications at the regional, national, and global level for sustaining human communities and the resources on which we depend.

Protecting Our Ocean Ecosystems

The Mid-Atlantic States have been leaders in embracing new approaches to management in the past. To successfully address a new generation of challenges, and to ensure that future generations can enjoy healthy and productive ocean ecosystems, we are committed to a new comprehensive, regional approach. Stronger partnerships among our States can overcome jurisdictional barriers and provide a mechanism for coordinating actions to achieve region-wide results. National reports by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission, and legislation such as the Oceans Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act (OCEANS-21), have endorsed regional governance approaches to address existing and emerging challenges to ocean health.

A regional approach will foster a cooperative and constructive relationship among the States, avoiding unintentional conflicts between adjacent States managing shared resources. Greater coordination will lead to greater predictability and efficiency in regulatory processes. We will be positioned to take advantage of new opportunities to protect sensitive or unique offshore resources, or to sustainably develop the potential of our shared energy resources. By working together, our five States will build a solid foundation for promoting greater, more effective federal and private investment, and for generating more attention, on priority issues for our States.

A regional approach will also strengthen efforts within each of our States to embrace a more comprehensive and ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities. While our focus is on addressing emerging challenges in the ocean environment, to be successful we will need to address the connections between upland, nearshore, and offshore areas. The actions contemplated under this approach will provide opportunities for the States to collaborate across the region, from the watersheds to the offshore areas, and to address economic, social, and other factors.

By endorsing greater collaboration among our States, we hope to maintain and improve the health of our ocean and coastal resources, and ensure that they continue to contribute to the high quality of life and economic vitality of our region's communities well into the future. Therefore we, the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, are coming together to advance a regional approach for addressing the challenges facing our region's resources.

Guiding Principles

We, the Governors, agree to the following principles as the foundation for our collaboration:

- *The Mid-Atlantic region's resources and people are intrinsically linked components of larger ecosystems.* The coastal and offshore waters from New York to Virginia, and the resources they contain, do not adhere to state or other jurisdictional boundaries.
- *The Mid-Atlantic region faces a new generation of challenges and opportunities that require a commitment to an ecosystem-based management approach.* Such an approach provides the comprehensive perspective necessary to help improve the health of the region's ocean resources as an integrated whole. This approach stresses the inter-relationships between and among vibrant communities, robust economies, and healthy environments, and includes economic, social, and other factors. Using this approach to manage the use of offshore resources in the region, such as renewable energy resources, can foster a more efficient and sustainable regional economy and improve the quality of life for our citizens.
- *The States within the Mid-Atlantic region desire to protect and conserve our ocean resources for current and future generations.* Recognizing that the region's communities, economies, and quality of life are tied to ocean resources, the continued growth and prosperity of the Mid-Atlantic region will rely on a commitment to address new challenges as they arise.
- *The Mid-Atlantic States desire to promote a regional agenda at the national level.* The federal Coastal Zone Management Act provides a strong role for States in determining what activities occur in our coastal waters and in offshore waters beyond our State boundaries. Collaborating on a regional scale will help us to realize a more integrated vision for these activities and will strengthen our voice with Congress and federal agencies in shaping the future of our coastal and offshore resources.
- *The priorities and shared actions of our regional agreement will evolve.* The challenges facing our coastal and ocean resources are complex and changing, and our scientific understanding of ocean ecosystems continues to grow. We recognize the need to adapt to new challenges and the latest science.
- *Each State within the Mid-Atlantic region has an equal stake in a successful outcome.* Though State coastlines, resources, and institutional capacity may vary, the States enter this agreement as equal partners. Improving ocean health within the region benefits all States. Similarly, addressing challenges using an ecosystem-based approach requires a commitment to shared action among all States.
- *Partnership with federal and external stakeholders is critical to success.* The States are principal management agents of the coast and ocean and desire a strong State leadership role. At the same time, we understand that we are but one set of stakeholders with a vested interest in the health of the Mid-Atlantic region. We also recognize that many federal programs have jurisdiction within or beyond State waters. The meaningful engagement of federal, business, academic, and non-governmental entities is necessary to form a comprehensive approach.
- *Coordination is essential to successful management at the regional level.* A Mid-Atlantic Governors' ocean initiative must complement the strides being made in each State to recognize the key role of ecosystem services in sustaining human and natural communities, and must have appropriate flexibility in how the States participate in the resulting actions and strategies. Coordination with existing interstate initiatives will ensure that this partnership retains its focus on priority issues. Rather than promoting the creation of new programs or offices, we will strive to leverage existing resources and personnel to collaborate on shared actions.

Priorities:

We, the Governors, acknowledge that the challenges facing our region's ocean and coastal resources are broad and diverse. We have identified the following as the initial priorities for shared action to improve ocean health:

- *Coordinate protection of important habitats and sensitive and unique offshore areas on a regional scale.* As our ocean and coastal ecosystems face increasing demands for limited space and resources, the need to protect and restore habitats has become more urgent. A regional approach to habitat protection will provide opportunities for conservation of resources at a regional scale, across jurisdictional boundaries.
- *Promote improvements in the region's coastal water quality as a necessary focal point for regional action.* Water quality is a pervasive issue throughout the region, and factors which affect it reach far into the watershed. Investments in infrastructure will be a key component in addressing the causes of water quality degradation in a comprehensive manner.

- *Collaborate on a regional approach to support the sustainable development of renewable energy in offshore areas.* We recognize the immense potential of our ocean to address one of today's largest challenges, energy supply. Yet it is essential that, as numerous State and regional initiatives advance, they are supported by a coordinated effort to provide a predictable regulatory framework that is based on an enhanced scientific understanding of the impacts of energy development on coastal and ocean resources.
- *Prepare the region's coastal communities for the impacts of climate change on ocean and coastal resources.* Climate change and its associated impacts threaten to indelibly alter the Mid-Atlantic region and its resources. Increased coastal hazards, such as flooding and erosion, will threaten existing infrastructure and public health and safety. The widespread nature of this problem also will challenge our efforts to manage human activities across the region.

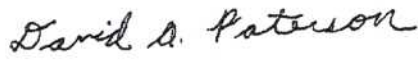
Shared Actions:

Establish mechanisms for greater coordination on regional ocean issues. In order for the Mid-Atlantic States to effectively implement this agreement, we agree on the need for instituting the following mechanisms for participation:

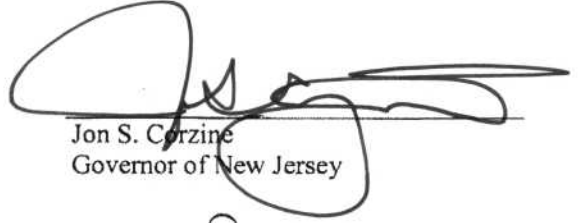
- We, the Governors of the Mid-Atlantic States, will form the body of a regional council, to be named the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean ("the Council"). The Council will provide a lasting forum for interstate collaboration on actions that will improve the health of the region's coastal and ocean resources.
- We each will designate a lead point of contact to serve on an "Executive Committee", which will coordinate our State's activities in the priority areas and implementation of the Council's direction. The Executive Committee will ensure that each State takes the appropriate actions in cooperation with the other States, and will direct the involvement of State agency personnel. The Executive Committee will be responsible for reporting back to the Governors on progress made in addressing the priorities of this Agreement.
- Appropriate federal agencies with significant resource responsibilities in the Mid-Atlantic will be asked to participate as partners in our shared actions. The Council designees will be responsible for coordinating with the designated points of contact from these federal agencies.
- Within six months, we will host a summit to engage the region's stakeholders and to create new partnerships as we develop and implement actions to address our regional priorities. The summit will include members of the academic, business, and advocacy communities, and the public at large, and will provide opportunity to comment and solicit involvement on the shared actions developed under this agreement.
- Next spring, and periodically as necessary, the Council will meet to review the broad policy direction of this agreement and to identify new priority issues for interstate collaboration. In the interim, Governors may introduce new priority issues under this agreement, provided they are willing to commit their State to leading the coordination of that issue.

Develop and implement shared actions: Our five States will work together to develop a set of shared actions to address the four priorities identified in this Agreement. The development and implementation of these actions will include participation by federal partners and stakeholders, as appropriate and through the mechanisms outlined above. The shared actions we agree to may evolve and change, depending on new scientific information, stakeholder input, and other factors.

On June 4, 2009, we, the Governors, commit to this regional agreement and will take appropriate actions within our States to support the agreement's priorities and actions. We look forward to working in a spirit of collaboration with our partners throughout the region to improve the health of our shared ocean and coastal ecosystems.



David A. Paterson
Governor of New York



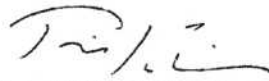
Jon S. Corzine
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