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**Ocean Policy Task Force Press Conference**  
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**As Delivered**

Good afternoon. I'm delighted to be here in Anchorage, as part of President Obama's Ocean Policy Task Force.

Because of Alaska's large and diverse coastal areas, we are here to listen to people who know the ocean well and care passionately about the uses of it.

We want to hear from you about the policies and practices that are needed to ensure that Alaska has healthy, productive, and resilient oceans and vibrant coastal communities, cultures, and economies.

During this week, we have had wonderful opportunities to learn from the residents in Nome, Shishmaref, Fairbanks, Barrow, Deadhorse and now Anchorage.

We had valuable conversations with state, local and tribal officials, researchers, educators, and people from all walks of life about the value, fragility, and changing nature of Alaska's bountiful marine resources.

We also witnessed the effects of climate change on Native Alaskan villages, talked with researchers about how they monitor climate change, and learned how the ongoing decline in seasonal sea ice is changing Alaska's marine ecosystems.

These changes are introducing both challenges and opportunities. Many are anticipating a new Arctic "Gold Rush" eventually involving fishing, energy development, shipping and tourism... these activities can compete with each other and with existing and traditional uses of ocean resources.

Collectively, the whole ensemble will place additional and very likely significant stress on the ocean ecosystem and our Nation's ability to protect its people and exercise its sovereign rights.

In every other ocean basin around the world, overexploitation has led to widespread depletion and disruption, often despite good intentions.

Melting of sea ice in the Arctic is creating new opportunities – new opportunities for uses, but also new opportunities to learn from past mistakes and this time to get it right: To use the ocean and its resources wisely and sustainably.

Let me focus for a moment on fisheries and on a landmark decision announced just yesterday that I believe provides a great model for expanded activities in the Arctic.

Yesterday, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke approved a first-ever Fishery Management Plan for the Arctic that ensures any new fishing in the Arctic does not damage the overall health of this fragile ecosystem.

Developed and approved unanimously by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the plan ensures that we gather sufficient information on fish and the Arctic environment before beginning new commercial fishing activities in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.

This is not to say we can't use the ocean. We need to be able to use it – just not use it up.

With so much at stake, the Arctic provides a unique opportunity to use a precautionary approach, but also to employ a potentially very useful tool called - Marine Spatial Planning.

Marine Spatial Planning brings known, emerging, and potential ocean users together, assesses the competing pressures, and works on a plan to minimize conflict in ways that protect the ocean and the people who want to use it.

Marine Spatial Planning can provide the oversight that ensures healthy, productive and resilient ocean and coastal ecosystems that in turn support coastal communities, cultures, and economies.

I cannot conceive of a geographic area where this is more important than in the Arctic.

We are here today because we care. Each of us in the Federal Family of this Task Force brings unique capacities that we can bring to help build a framework for a more holistic and thoughtful approach to managing the oceans.

I look forward to listening and learning more in today's public meeting. Thank you for coming.