

OCEAN REVOLUTIONS

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Oregon Coast
Photo by Chris Speakman

The Bottom-Up Ocean Revolution

"Be the change you want to see in the world." -- Mahatma Gandhi

On February 16, 2005 the Kyoto Protocol took effect in the 141 countries that ratified it. The Kyoto Protocol, a United Nations agreement, is a commitment to reduce emissions of green house gases to reduce the impacts of climate change.

As the world's largest emitter of green house gases, the United States was conspicuously absent from the signatories. Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels felt that the federal government was wrong for not joining the Kyoto Protocol so he decided to take action at the local level.

On that same day Kyoto took effect, Mayor Nickels challenged mayors across the country to join Seattle in taking local action to reduce global warming emissions. He announced that the City of Seattle would reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions to meet or beat the Kyoto target. Beyond that he launched the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to encourage other cities to take on the challenge of meeting the Kyoto targets. A little over 18 months later he has succeeded in getting 320 mayors representing over 51.6 million Americans to join him.

What does a bunch of mayors signing onto Kyoto have to do with motivating ocean conservation? The parallels between Kyoto and the Oceans Reports are many. First, despite broad recognition of global threats to our health and well-being, the federal government made little or no progress on either. Second, despite federal inaction, local and state government are initiating substantive change. Last, local action can motivate change at all levels of government. Just as Mayor Nickels has launched a local climate change revolution, we need to launch a local ocean protection revolution. Fortunately, the seeds of that revolution are starting to appear at the state level.

For more info: http://www.surfrider.org/srui.aspx?uiq=a-z/global_warming
<http://www.seattle.gov/climate/>

West Coast Governor's Agreement on Oceans' Health

Recently, the governors of Oregon, Washington and California signed the West Coast Governors Agreement on Ocean Health. As stated in their public release, these governors recognized that, "Washington, Oregon, and California share a rich and diverse bounty of ocean and coastal resources that provide enormous economic, environmental, and social benefits to our states. Yet our citizens' continued use and enjoyment of coastal and ocean resources are at risk. Polluted waters, declining populations of fish and other marine life, degraded near-shore habitats, risks of severe storms and tsunamis, and impacts related to climate change are but a few examples of serious threats to the continued vitality of our ocean-dependent states. Recently, two national ocean commissions concluded that our oceans are in trouble and called

for immediate, meaningful action at all levels of government to restore and maintain their health."

These states are taking a first step to implement recommendations in the Ocean Reports that call for improved coordination among governing bodies and that the oceans and coasts must be managed at the ecosystem level. Some priority issues they have identified are: Ensuring clean coastal waters and beaches; Protecting and restoring healthy ocean and coastal habitats; Promoting the effective implementation of ecosystem-based management of our ocean and coastal resources; Reducing adverse impacts of offshore development; Increasing ocean awareness and literacy among our citizens.

For more information:

<http://www.resources.ca.gov/>
<http://www.governor.wa.gov/news/news-view.asp?pressRelease=355&newsType=1>
http://governor.oregon.gov/Gov/p2006/press_091806b.shtml

New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act

On the other side of the country, the state of New York has taken initiative to address the ocean crisis. New York became the second state in the country, after California, to establish a state council to coordinate marine resource efforts by taking aggressive steps to protect imperiled ocean and coastal resources through the implementation of an ecosystem-based management approach. With the unanimous passage of the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act, New York has stepped forward as a leader in ocean protection.

The act establishes a strong state policy of conserving and restoring our ocean and coastal resources by forcing management to address the ways human activities and ecosystems synergistically impact each other. Ecosystem-based management requires a long-term view and will lead regulatory agencies away from managing on a species-by-species, problem-by-problem basis. The act also creates an interagency New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council comprising the heads of various state agencies to improve coordination, reduce duplication of effort, and ensure accountability among those responsible for marine resources. Among other efforts, the Council will also create an atlas of ocean and coastal resources to help ensure accurate information is available at all levels of government.

For more info: <http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/06/0809061.html>

Florida's Coastal and Ocean Future: A Blueprint for Economic and Environmental Leadership

In a more grassroots approach to gaining state-level support for the Ocean Report recommendations, 20 environmental, recreational and civic groups (including

the Surfrider Foundation) recently unveiled a blueprint that addresses the threats to Florida's coasts and ocean waters including pollution, beach erosion, offshore drilling, global warming and overfishing. The report entitled *Florida's Coastal and Ocean Future: A Blueprint for Economic and Environmental Leadership* called for Florida's next Governor to join California, Oregon Washington and New York to:

- Strengthen Ocean Governance
- Curb Unwise Coastal Development and Protect Valuable Coastal Habitats
- Reduce Coastal and Ocean Pollution
- Restore Marine Ecosystems, Ensure Robust Fisheries, and Protect Marine Species
- Reduce Global Warming Pollution

One of the specific recommendations to achieve these objectives is to establish a coastal and oceans chief in the governor's office to coordinate efforts by state agencies.

For more info:

<http://www.nrdc.org/oceans/florida/ffuture.asp>

As these stories demonstrate, the fall of 2006 has seen a lot of action at the state level to implement the Ocean Report recommendations. It is encouraging to see states of Oregon, Washington, California and New York and the conservation groups of Florida taking local initiative to address the national and global challenge of ocean and coastal protection. While it is too early to tell if these efforts will lead to meaningful action, it is clearly a step in the right direction.

While state level action is commendable, Surfrider Foundation activists know that many important coastal and ocean conservation decisions are made at the local level. We also understand that only through local commitment and a strong mandate for change, will states make the tough choices required to initiate the true coastal and ocean revolution required for the future of our coasts and oceans.

Making Ocean Protection a Local Issue

"I never worry about action, but only about inaction." --Winston Churchill

When it comes to ocean policy and conservation, many large organizations work at the national and state level but there are few organizations making sure local communities and local governments have the information, resources and support necessary to support a proactive ocean protection agenda. Generating this local momentum will not only advance the state and regional efforts, like West Coast Governor's Agreement on Ocean Health, but it will also begin to generate a broad mandate for ocean and coastal policy reform at all levels of government.

Like Mayor Nickel's initiative on climate change, there is a great opportunity for Surfrider Foundation activists to drive proactive ocean and coastal strategies that can be implemented at the local level. By generating public support and supporting elected officials who are ocean champions at the local level, Surfrider Foundation activists can provide regional and statewide initiatives the support they need.

A first step to accomplishing this is to educate local elected officials on the importance of ocean and coastal protection so that they understand the impacts and benefits to their local community. A community-based citizen driven initiative for ocean conservation will also provide the political cover and pressure needed to put ocean and coastal conservation on the political radar and keep the pressure on to implement meaningful ocean and coastal protection measures.

It is not a surprise that the ocean revolution isn't coming from the top down, but there are signs that it may be coming from the bottom up. Surfrider Foundation activists can continue to propel this ground swell of support and hold the local, regional and state governments accountable to real and lasting change in the way we treat our coasts and oceans.