The Stratton Roundtable

Looking Forward, Looking Back:
Lessons from the 1969 Commission on Marine Science, Engineering, and Resources

Summary

Organized by:

Center for the Study of Marine Policy
National Ocean Service, NOAA
Ocean Governance Study Group

Friday, May 1, 1998
Hay-Adams Hotel
Washington, D.C.

Background

On May 1, 1998, members and staff of the Stratton Commission, whose work in 1969 led to the founding of NOAA, enactment of the 1972 Coastal Zone Management Act, and other important advances in ocean and coastal management, met with today's ocean and coastal leaders. They discussed the establishment and accomplishments of the 1960s commission, current proposals for a new ocean commission, changed conditions, and lessons learned. This is a synopsis of that meeting.

Thirty Years Ago

Impelled by national concern for U.S. leadership in science and education, and growing worries about the condition of valuable coastal areas and living resources, a congressionally mandated, presidentially appointed commission assessed the nation's stake in the oceans and recommended ocean and coastal policy for the United States. The commission set priorities for federal ocean activities that continue to guide this nation. Many of the issues that were addressed 30 years ago remain with us today, although the environmental and management contexts have changed in dramatic ways.

The 1969 Oceans Commission Led to:

- 1972 Coastal Zone Management Act
- U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- International Decade of Ocean Exploration

Today's Influences and Concerns

A new environmental awareness in the nation—indeed, in much of the world—now influences virtually all aspects of governmental policy. Secure energy supplies have an important place on the geopolitical agenda. Advances in international law have extended the jurisdictions of coastal nations 200 miles offshore for purposes of managing resources. More generally, a remarkable framework of international agreements is increasingly governing international commerce as well as environmental management.

A New Ocean Commission—An Opportunity for the Nation

Against this backdrop, the U.S. Congress is considering the establishment of a new commission on the oceans, to once again assess what is at stake and to recommend actions that will rejuvenate the nation's ocean and coastal policies and programs, and realign them for the future. The Senate has endorsed such a plan, and the idea is progressing in the House of Representatives.

The Roundtable

Believing that a review of events leading up to the first ocean commission, its work and its accomplishments would inform and enrich the present debate, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in partnership with the University of Delaware and the Ocean Governance Study Group, organized a roundtable bringing together the principals involved in the first commission and today's leaders, who are developing the proposal for a new national commission. On May 1, 36 leaders from federal and state governments, industry, environmental organizations and academia met to (1) discuss lessons learned from the process of organizing and implementing the first ocean commission; (2) discuss the 1998 proposals and policy context and how they differ from those of the 1960s; and (3) make recommendations concerning the scope and implementation of a new ocean commission.

Agenda

Welcome
Robert W. Knecht, University of Delaware
Sally Yozell, NOAA

The Stratton Commission (1969): Its Work, Outcomes and Significance
Panel session of commission members and staff, moderated by Biliana Cicin-Sain, University of Delaware

Historical Analysis of the Stratton Commission's Role, Function and Impact
Harry Scheiber, University of California at Berkeley, School of Law

Stratton Commission—Then and Now: What Worked Well and What Did Not?
Mary Hope Katsouros, The Heinz Center
Open discussion moderated by Thomas Kitsos, U.S. Department of the Interior

The Changed Context of the 1990s: Forces that Have Affected and Will Affect National Ocean Policy
Jack Archer, University of Massachusetts

Ocean Policy Issues Today: Outcomes of the 1998 Heinz Center Workshops
Charles A. Bookman, The Heinz Center

Vision for the Oceans Act of 1998
Comments from congressional staff and industrial and environmental leaders, moderated by Nancy Foster, National Ocean Service, NOAA

Recommendations for a New National Ocean Policy Commission
Open discussion moderated by Richard Delaney, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Stratton Commission Roundtable Attendees

Members and Staff of the Stratton Commission and Marine Sciences Council (1969)

Lewis Alexander, University of Rhode Island
John A. Knauss, University of Rhode Island
Samuel A. Lawrence, University of Maryland
Edward Wenk, Jr., University of Washington
Robert M. White, Washington Advisory Group

Roundtable Participants

Jack H. Archer, University of Massachusetts
Stephanie Bailenson, Senate Commerce Committee
James Baker, NOAA
Daniel J. Basta, National Ocean Service, NOAA
*Charles A. Bookman,*The Heinz Center
John R. Botzum, Nautilus Press, Inc.
Biliana Cicin-Sain, University of Delaware
Warner Chabot, Center for Marine Conservation, Monterey, CA
Penny Dalton, Senate Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans
Richard Delaney, University of Massachusetts, Boston
Sylvia Earle, SeaWeb
Tim Eichenberg, Center for Marine Conservation
Nancy Foster, National Ocean Service, NOAA
Susan Garbini, National Research Council
Linda Glover, United States Navy
Mary Hope Katsouros, The Heinz Center
Thomas Kitsos, Department of Interior
Robert W. Knecht, University of Delaware
Anthony MacDonald, Coastal States Organization
Christopher G. Mann, House Committee on Resources
Roger McManus, Center for Marine Conservation
Barbara Jean Polo, American Oceans Campaign
John Rayfield, House Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans
Jackie Savitz, Coast Alliance
Daniel Sayre, Island Press
Harry Scheiber, University of California, Berkeley
Robert Stewart, National Ocean Industries Association
Carolyn A. Thoroughgood, University of Delaware
John Twiss, Marine Mammal Commission
Eli Weissman, Office of U.S Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ)
Stanley Wilson, NOAA
Sally J. Yozell, NOAA

The full report of the roundtable, including the complete text of all presentations, papers and relevant reference documents, will be available in July 1998. A 15-minute video recording the reflections of the commission members and staff also will be available.

To obtain the full report, contact:

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Summary

Lessons from the First Ocean Commission (1969)

In the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, studies and reports on the oceans, in combination with concerns about science competitiveness launched by the space race (and the associated soul searching), created political momentum and a propitious climate to explore ocean issues at the federal level.

Political champions are important. Interested and committed congressional leaders and staff pushed the oceans cause because of their personal enthusiasm, and not necessarily in response to a groundswell of public opinion or at the behest of constituents. Senior officials in the Executive Branch of government also devoted time and energy to ocean issues. This interest and support, cultivated over a number of years, gave the commission’s recommendations a certain amount of attention.

Careful selection of commission members and staff is crucial. Those close to the process emphasized the central importance of the selection of commission members. The quality of the members’ varied backgrounds and expertise, and especially the exceptional talent of the commission chairman and the dedicated staff, were largely responsible for the commission’s success.

Adequate time and resources are necessary. Thirty months elapsed between the approval of the legislation for the commission and the commission’s presentation of a final report. Participants were doubtful that the work could have been completed any sooner.

The commission should not be constrained by the political process. A commission to study long-term aspects of the issuess and a Marine Sciences Council in the Executive Office of the President to coordinate day-to-day issues were established simultaneously as the result of a political compromise. Nevertheless, the council helped facilitate the commission’s work without inhibiting or constraining it. Whether this would be the case in the current context is uncertain.

Timing of the final report is a factor. The timing of the commission’s report was important. The commision was faced with the choice of delivering its report to a “lame-duck” President who had supported its work, or waiting to share it with his successor, perhaps of a different political party and perhaps less supportive. Either choice presented political difficulties, which were especially thorny due to several recommended changes in governmental organization. The commission opted to release its report to the incoming Administration. In the end, the commission scored successes with some, though not all, of its recommendations.

The Policy Context Then and Now

Following a decade of studies and congressional hearings, both the Congress and Administration were ready to accept forward-looking ideas concerning the oceans. Though no immediate crisis faced the nation, the perceived “science-math gap” with the Soviet Union, along with the space race, fueled interest in exploring and developing the oceans and their resources.

Americans’ view of marine issues has changed. In the 1960s, marine resources were viewed as essentially infinite, and efforts were made to expand their use and accelerate development to grow the economy. Marine resources are now understood to be finite, even fragile. The interconnectedness of all resources on or near the coast, and even far upstream, has become apparent.

Growth in population and trade raise new issues. Nowadays, the global reach of economies sparks concern for national competitiveness in the international arena. Moreover, among the most profound changes has been the encroachment of humanity on the seas. The increase in coastal populations stresses coastal and marine environments. A hopeful trend, however, is people's growing understanding of the resources, in part as a result of sustained research.

The approach to managing marine resources is changing. The traditional players—federal and state governments—have been joined by regional and local governments as well as by industry and the environmental community. The States, especially, are assuming larger roles. In today's world, solutions and innovations may be devised and used by all stakeholders, including multiple levels of government and the private and nonprofit sectors. In the future, management programs will increasingly recognize the limits of the federal budget, the constraints on states, and the power for change that can be achieved through market forces.

The issues today are no less pressing. While the situation today is markedly different from that of 30 years ago, national ocean policy issues are no less pressing. What kind of governance regime is appropriate for our 200-mile-wide, rich and extensive Exclusive Economic Zone? What approaches offer the greatest promise of restoring important fisheries? What policies are needed to improve the management of shorelines? Of coastal watersheds? Of ports? Of the nation's offshore energy and mineral resources? What investments are necessary to continue the benefits to society from advances in ocean sciences? These issues, and others like them, could be usefully addressed in a structured review of current U.S. oceanic and coastal policies.

Findings and Questions Concerning a New Ocean Commission

The following findings and questions for a new national ocean and coastal policy review have been gleaned from the papers, presentations and discussions at the roundtable:

- The commission needs a broad mandate, and should be independent.
- The quality of the membership of the Stratton Commission had much to do with its effectiveness. Will the commission appointment process set out in the recently mandated Oceans Act result in top-caliber participants in the commission?
- The Stratton Commission chose not to address policy issues related to national security and marine transportation. If these topics are incorporated into the slate of ocean and coastal issues, how will they affect a new commission?
- A mechanism or set of arrangements is needed that will encourage and facilitate federal agencies to support the work of the commission without inhibiting or constraining it.
- It will be very important to obtain and maintain the interest and support of the White House and the Congress, and to energize the public during the Commission's tenure. Once the commission issues its report, it will be especially important to make sure that its work remains on the agenda, and that its recommendations are given serious attention in both the Executive Branch and Congress.
- The commission will need to undertake a comprehensive analysis of federal ocean programs, e.g., relevant trends, performance indicators, and organizational issues.

Continuing and Building the National Dialogue

What is the National Dialogue? The Stratton Roundtable was one of several 1998 "Year of the Ocean" events to focus national attention on the need to address U.S. ocean policies and programs in the next century.

As a critical element of its mission to enhance coastal stewardship, NOAA's National Ocean Service plans to provide opportunities for an ongoing "National Dialogue" concerning ocean and coastal policy. NOAA, together with its fellow stewards, seeks to explore all of the issues with all interested parties. A national dialogue can characterize the issues and trends, and can engage the interested public in discussions concerning their perceptions of priorities and approaches to solutions.

Milestones toward a National Dialogue on Ocean and Coastal Policy. Recent milestones include the *Year of the Ocean Discussion Papers*, federal ocean agencies report, February 1998; *Our Ocean Future,* report of The Heinz Center, May 1998; the Stratton Roundtable, Washington, DC, May 1998; and the National Oceans Conference, Monterey, CA, June 1998.

Upcoming National Meetings. Two upcoming meetings will address major environmental, economic and other trends that have shaped oceans and coasts activities and policies over the past generation, and that are forecast to do so in the future. The meetings will be held in Washington, DC in September 1998, and Berkeley, CA in October 1998. For information, contact R.W. Knecht or B. Cicin-Sain, phone (302) 831-8086; fax (302) 831-3668.

NOAA invites you to co-host a National Dialogue workshop. Beginning in the fall of 1998, NOAA plans to pursue the National Dialogue in a structured workshop format, and is actively seeking partners to engage in the process. To co-host a national dialogue workshop with NOAA, contact Dr. Nancy Foster, National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Hwy., 13th Fl., Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone (301) 713-3074, ext. 154; fax (301) 713-4269.

Check out NOAA's State of the Coast Report

http:/state-of-coast.noaa.gov

NOAA's State of the Coast Report, an interactive Web site on coastal issues, is an important supporting element of the National Dialogue. It provides a powerful capability to share the latest information on coastal and ocean trends. The on-line report also will be used to post results from national dialogue meetings, and to continue discussions using interactive information technology.

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