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N E W S R E L E A S E

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## Ocean Champions Community Pushes for "OCEANS-21" Bill Unifying Scientists, Politicians and Environmentalists For Comprehensive Healthy Oceans Policy

**March 6, 2008, Capitola, CA** – Today, the entire Ocean Champions community reaffirms its strong support for the revised OCEANS-21 Bill. For decades scientists have identified major threats to our oceans and environmentalists have fought for stronger protection. Now ocean leaders in Congress are ready to move legislation to address these issues in a coordinated effort. The bill, known as OCEANS-21 (short for Ocean Conservation, Education and National Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act), if passed will establish a national ocean policy to protect, maintain and restore the health of ocean ecosystems. It is poised to be marked up by the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans of the House Natural Resources Committee, the first major step towards passage by the full committee, and ultimately the House of Representatives.

Currently, our oceans are managed under 140 laws implemented by 20 Federal agencies without a unifying policy that would protect the overall health and productivity of the ocean. The legislation, introduced by Rep. Sam Farr, D-CA and recently rewritten to increase its chances for passage, will create a national vision for the nation's oceans and provide the mechanism to enact that vision and funding. "We have taken our oceans for granted for too long, and an overhaul of our ocean policy is long overdue," said Rep. Farr. "OCEANS-21 is a bi-partisan bill that will allow us to care for and manage our oceans properly. The joining of national and regional ocean management strategies in OCEANS-21 is our best chance to counter the damage that years of failed policies have produced."

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The bill already has 66 co-sponsors; including Representatives from Florida, New Jersey, Hawaii and Massachusetts, as well as from Kansas, Tennessee, Arizona and New Mexico. "Ocean health and sustainability impact every region with respect to food supply, natural disasters and even recreational opportunities," said Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M. "The implementation of a singular policy is critical to ensure that we protect, maintain and restore the health of our ocean ecosystems."

"Our community of Ocean Champions followed and supported OCEANS-21 for almost two years. It will be very exciting for all of us to experience the benefit of this comprehensive, healthy ocean Bill," said David Wilmot, PhD., President and Co-founder of Ocean Champions.

Ocean Champions, in collaboration with fellow conservation organizations, is tapping into its active community to rally support for OCEANS-21, both in Congress as well as from its network of ocean supporters. "Building public support for national ocean policy reform, especially OCEANS-21, is fundamental for fixing our broken ocean policies," Rep. Farr said. "The role that Ocean Champions plays in educating the public and applying pressure is vital in our efforts to get this legislation passed."

Ocean Champions is the only nonprofit political organization that endorses pro-ocean Congressional candidates and lobbies members of Congress on behalf of the oceans. To learn more about Ocean Champions or OCEANS-21, visit [www.oceanchampions.org](http://www.oceanchampions.org).

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