

TURNING THE TIDE

Charting a Course to Improve the Effectiveness
of Public Advocacy for the Oceans

FINAL REPORT

October 2003

David Wilmot, Ph.D. • Jack K. Sterne, J.D.

Contributors: Kim Haddow, Elizabeth Sullivan

Report to the
David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Oak Foundation
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Executive Summary

A Moment in Time

Over the last year, a number of ocean reports and studies have presented details about the alarming decline of the oceans' largest predatory fishes, the growing threat of global climate change and its impacts on coral reefs, and a general failure of current ocean management practices, among other ocean ills. "America's oceans are in crisis," declared the national report, *America's Living Oceans: Charting a Course for Sea Change* by the independent Pew Oceans Commission, which detailed the state of our seas.¹ While many concede that America's oceans are in crisis, ocean conservationists lack the political power to achieve the essential reforms that are necessary to turn the tide and create what *America's Living Oceans* calls "a fundamental change in the nation's posture toward its oceans."²

Advancing public policy changes that will replace failed management systems and restore healthy, thriving oceans rests largely in the hands of the ocean conservation community. This community has dramatically increased its profile over the last 20 years, securing important conservation victories resulting in a significant increase in the level of environmental protection for the oceans. However, the pace of conservation victories has slowed substantially, even as ocean threats continue to grow and opponents of conservation organize themselves. Overall, the tide is ebbing and threatens to strand conservation organizations far from their public policy objective of healthy and productive oceans. There is widespread agreement, in and out of the advocacy community, that the ocean conservation community could be more effective.

"Getting Americans involved in protecting the oceans is one of our greatest challenges." – The Honorable Leon Panetta, Former Chief of Staff in the Clinton Administration and Chairman of the Pew Oceans Commission

A Search for Solutions

The need for more effective advocacy on behalf of the oceans is both urgent and timely, but how best to proceed? To answer this important question, this study set out to identify the “hallmarks of success” of successful and noteworthy public advocacy organizations. These are organizations that are consistently able to get and keep the attention of relevant decision-makers. While they do not win every policy battle, they win enough that they cannot be ignored.

In identifying these hallmarks, we began with the hypothesis that successful organizations must employ a specific set of identifiable tools that lead to success. Our hypothesis proved correct. Through in-depth research on, and interviews with, a representative cross-section of environmental, non-environmental and fishing public advocacy organizations, we determined that successful organizations almost universally employ the same specific set of tools or strategic elements. We identified these eight hallmarks of success as: communications, grassroots support, lobbying, electoral politics, strategic alliances, research, fundraising, and litigation. While not every organization uses every element in all circumstances, or the same proportion of elements, they all use most of them, and they use them well.

Not only do successful organizations use these elements well, but *how* they use them is equally important. Successful organizations almost universally operate from campaign mode, meaning that the elements of their advocacy – communications, grassroots support, lobbying, electoral politics – are all integrated into a strategic plan that anticipates both setbacks and victories. This coordinated campaigning gives these organizations the type of discipline, flexibility, and focus that leads to success.

Interestingly, a common current running throughout these organizations, and the strategies they employ, involves the importance of cultivating and maintaining high quality relationships – with the media, their grassroots supporters, their congressional delegations, their strategic partners, and with their funding sources. Successful organizations understand the importance of people and their relationships with them, and they pour enormous resources into forming and strengthening these connections.

Having identified the keys to success as part of our study, we then evaluated the ocean conservation community with respect to the hallmarks, and developed recommendations that the ocean conservation community could follow to become more effective.

A Rising Tide

Our conclusions and recommendations chart a new course in ocean advocacy. We begin with the recognition that ocean conservation organizations and the community at-large need to be more effective to take on current challenges and advance urgently needed initiatives, such as the ocean governance reforms called for in *America's Living Oceans*, and reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. We conclude that ocean conservation organizations need to increase their strength and build new relationships by expanding their capacities in underdeveloped, or non-existent areas. We are confident that, if the ocean conservation community follows these recommendations, it will soon find itself riding a rising tide of effectiveness to public policy success.

Three Priorities for Progress

While this report makes recommendations in a number of areas, our analysis reveals that there are three overarching priority areas that deserve special attention. These three priorities are:

- (1) participating fully in the political process;
- (2) conducting coordinated campaigns; and
- (3) improving organizational relationships.

Many of our specific recommendations suggest particular actions that are geared to improving the community's performance in these priority areas. However, it is critical that the ocean conservation community understands the importance of these overarching priorities before implementing the specific remedies we prescribe.

Priority One: Conservation is Politics

If there is a single take-home message from this study, it is that the ocean conservation community needs to participate fully in the political process to be successful. Full participation involves both professional and grassroots lobbying and direct involvement in the electoral process. Lobbying gives an organization's agenda a voice, while electoral involvement makes elected officials willing to listen. The ocean community has participated in personal contact lobbying, but only to a limited extent. Lobbying is about relationships – the type of relationships lacking for the most part with ocean conservationists. The first step in enhancing lobbying is to simply do more of it. The second step is to lobby more effectively. In order to do

this, lobbyists, in particular junior lobbyists, must better understand the rules on Capitol Hill. Simply put, the community needs to do more lobbying and to do it better. Direct electoral involvement will be required because lobbying by itself will not be enough. Electoral politics is a fundamental aspect of our nation's political process and the keystone to policy success. Ocean conservationists have tended to focus on policy and have not gotten involved in electoral politics. As a result, ocean conservation is *not* a factor in the electoral process. The vast majority of U.S. senators and representatives (as well as governors and state legislatures) have not gotten the message that the oceans are in trouble and important reforms are urgently needed. While the oceans have supporters in Congress, there simply are no champions who are willing to fall on their swords for the cause. This is not surprising given that ocean activists have no way to either reward those who fight for ocean conservation or punish those who are opponents. Participating in electoral politics is critically important to cultivating the champions who are necessary for any movement to succeed in advancing its agenda. Doing so will require creating political organizations, like political action committees (PACs), which can solicit and make direct campaign contributions, and so-called 527s, which can conduct voter education, persuasion and turn-out activities.

Priority Two: Coordinated Campaigns Lead to Victory

While strengthening critical strategy areas – communications, grassroots, lobbying, electoral politics – is essential, it is not enough unless they are all used together in a coordinated, strategic way. Successful public policy organizations tend to operate from campaign mode. They establish clearly identified goals as well as the tactics to accomplish the goals, and build in milestones to evaluate progress and make mid-stream adjustments as necessary. This is a proactive process that helps organizations define “victory,” including what is negotiable and how to achieve it. The hallmarks of success (e.g., communications, grassroots support, lobbying, and electoral politics, strategic alliances, etc.) are integrated into the strategy from the beginning. While a campaign can be defensive by design, it is not reactive.

The ocean conservation community is too often reactive. This approach has grown from a culture where organizations or funders identify a problem, have a sincere desire to correct the problem, and forge ahead. While the conservation goals may be readily identifiable, there is often *not* a clear assessment of the likelihood of success, or the impact of success. In addition, the strategy, tactics, and coordination necessary for victory are less clearly defined and

sometimes missing. Finally, the focus and discipline required to achieve victory are easy to lose when not embedded in a tightly constructed plan for action.

The integration of a communications strategy into the overarching strategy is particularly important. Communicating an ocean conservation message to the public, or an identified target audience, is not something the ocean conservation community does well, yet it is fundamental for success. While identifying the message that will resonate has been difficult enough, research by SeaWeb and the Frameworks Institute provides solid advice on how to create more effective messages about ocean conservation. More fundamental, though, is the failure to appreciate the vital importance of communications and to integrate communications professionals and strategies into conservation campaigns from the very beginning. Successful campaigns are built around the right message, not just around the right policy. The ocean conservation community must pay as much attention to communication as it does to policy and begin to integrate communications into all advocacy from the start.

Successful communications is important in building a grassroots base. Successful organizations all have a solid and committed segment of the population that views the organization's success as being concurrent with their own self-interest. Unlike mere supporters, who believe in what the organization advocates but are not necessarily personally affected by its success or failure, an organization's base has a direct and personal stake in the agenda of the organization. A base is not the same thing as a membership. For instance, while the NRA has only about 4 million dues-paying members, its base is made up of the estimated 60-65 million gun owners in this country who have a personal stake in the NRA's agenda of protecting the right to keep and bear arms. An organization's base is a critical component of its political power, because these self-interested individuals are most likely both to contact their elected representatives, and to hold them accountable come election time. To date, the ocean conservation community has put very little effort into identifying and cultivating its base. Until the ocean conservation community develops a reliable base, its ability to produce the "fundamental change in the nation's posture toward its oceans" called for by the Pew Oceans Commission will be limited.

Priority Three: Strong Organizational Relationships Create a Climate for Success

To be successful, ocean conservation organizations will need to improve relationships both within and among groups and cultivate new alliances outside the community. Ocean activists are also not working together effectively to overcome the challenges they face. Competition and distrust are becoming more prevalent. Principles are frequently losing out to personalities, and conserving the oceans sometimes appears to be secondary to protecting turf. Coalitions within the community have struggled to find strength in diversity. Thus, rather than recognizing that having a variety of groups across the ideological spectrum can be a strength, there has been a tendency to attempt to force everyone to adopt similar, often identical, positions. Coalitions have usually been formed from the top down, in response to a particular issue of need rather than allowed to happen “organically” where strategic considerations play a dominant role as to which organizations participate and how.

As a result, much energy has been directed toward securing support for pet projects or infighting, rather than directed toward designing and running effective campaigns. Indeed, one seasoned observer of the community notes that, “[t]ypically, misunderstanding the interest in coordination for a requirement to collaborate in lock step, the relevant regional and national NGOs agree on 95% of a reform agenda, but waste 95% of their time arguing about the 5% details on which they disagree.”

Successful coalitions have many requirements but none greater than the need for all members to compromise. Many organizations have been unwilling to give up some level of control to achieve larger goals. As a result, current partnerships within the community are not highly effective or adequate. In many ways, much of the problem may be an inability to accept differences among organizations and individuals as legitimate, valid points of view, rather than “selling out.” The lack of openness, plus a lack of the habit of resolving conflict amongst allies, of forging compromises and feeling good about having done so, may be at the root of this disharmony.

Successful organizations recognize their weaknesses and are willing to join forces with other organizations that have strengths that compensate for those shortcomings. The ocean conservation community has established alliances (primarily within the community and in rare cases outside) and on occasion these alliances have had success. However, generally these alliances have been too few and too ineffective. Given the small size of the community, and the power of the industrial interests it opposes, forging partnerships and alliances outside the

community is critical to success. Whether it is with environmental groups that have not traditionally worked on ocean issues or with ocean user groups, establishing the right partnerships will bring greater strength to the movement.

Thus, there is a need for organizations to identify and successfully bring like-minded organizations into the fold. This reality will have its costs. First and foremost, it may mean giving up on some issues of importance in order to enlarge the base. No organization or movement can win without a strong base. Right now, the ocean conservation community is lacking a significant base. If conservation is politics and politics is the art of the deal, then the community needs to figure out what deals it can make to enlarge its base.

Specific Recommendations

Once these overarching priorities are recognized and accepted, the hard work of implementing change will begin. To that end, we offer specific recommendations on actions that the ocean conservation community can take to increase its effectiveness. While the majority of our recommendations are directed at individual organizations, it is our strong belief that the charitable foundations and individuals that support ocean conservation have a vital role to play in advancing their implementation. In fact, only with the encouragement and support of their charitable foundation partners and individual donors can organizations navigate the course plotted in this set of recommendations.

These recommendations are generally broken down into the eight hallmark areas – communications, grassroots, lobbying, electoral politics, strategic alliances, research, litigation, and fundraising. We also make recommendations on the overarching area of coordinated campaigning. The full suite of these recommendations and their rationale is laid out in the body of the report. We offer a condensed version of those recommendations here.

Coordinated Campaigns & Strategic Alliances

Successful public policy organizations tend to operate from campaign mode, with clearly established alliances and partners, unwavering focus on their goals and the support of experts and specialists. Such an approach is necessary if the community is to operate as one, if it is to stop operating piecemeal and pool its efforts. We therefore recommend that organizations:

- **Place a greater focus on developing and running strategic campaigns, as discussed above;**

- **Conduct a searching inventory of their internal strengths and weaknesses and become willing to make the necessary adjustments and compromises to form more successful strategic alliances within the community;**
- **Become willing to form more successful strategic alliances with new partners *outside* the community;**
- **Redouble efforts to spend limited resources efficiently by working to accomplish fundamental reform that will lead to real and lasting protection for the oceans and their wildlife;**
- **Recruit the appropriate specialists, in particular, the underutilized communications, grassroots, and political professionals.**

Message, Message, and More Message

Successful public policy organizations understand their mission and audience and communicate with skill and efficiency, working closely with specialists from the beginning. Thus, ocean conservation organizations should:

- **Include communications experts in any and all campaign strategy discussions from the beginning;**
- **Hire more seasoned communications professionals to complement the current talent pool;**
- **Develop a positive vision that can be communicated to the public and decision-makers;**
- **Craft more compelling messages about ocean conservation using the research by SeaWeb and the Frameworks Institutes;**
- **Increase significantly the quantity and depth of public opinion research to inform communications and outreach.**

Time to Build a Constituency for the Oceans

Successful public policy organizations build large bases of support and know how to activate them through proven and innovative channels to achieve their goals. We therefore recommend that organizations:

- **Continue ongoing efforts and enhance the level of sophistication in future efforts to build a base;**

- **Cultivate a base by identifying individuals with a direct connection to the ocean, in addition to those who are merely “supporters” of conservation;**
- **Develop the list enhancement tool, which compares voting records with conservation group membership lists to determine the most likely activists;**
- **Continue to explore the role of the Internet as part of a plan for establishing and building a relationship with a base.**

Enhancing Effectiveness of Lobbying

Successful public policy organizations build relationships with their elected officials and work with professionals and insiders to achieve success from within the system. Thus, organizations should:

- **Increase as quickly as feasible the quantity of personal contact lobbying;**
- **Place greater emphasis on understanding the behavior required for effective lobbying;**

Consider hiring Washington insider lobbyists on specific issues such as working the Appropriations Committees;

- **Spend more energy on finding real constituents, especially those that may have a personal connection, to lobby their senators and representatives;**
- **Explore options for creating a congressional fellowship program that would place interns in congressional offices;**
- **Evaluate the feasibility of an ocean issues think tank, which could articulate a long-term vision for ocean conservation, produce strategic publications and writings to advance this agenda, and provide quick-response expertise to the U.S. Congress.**

Electoral Politics is the Keystone

Successful public policy organizations cultivate congressional champions for their cause and hold them accountable. We therefore recommend that the ocean conservation community:

- **Create independent political committees – both a Political Action Committee, which can endorse and oppose candidates, as well as a 527**

organization, which can participate in issue advocacy and get-out-the-vote activities – that will focus solely on ocean conservation.

Scientific Information is Important, But it is Not Enough

While science is important to any conservation effort, it rarely carries the day in any public policy debate, since all such disputes are essentially political in nature. Nevertheless, it may be necessary to increase scientific capacity. In this regard, we recommend that organizations:

- **Increase scientific capacity, but as a secondary priority to implementing the recommended communication, grassroots, lobbying, and political changes;**
- **Create formal and informal science and conservation partnerships to tackle overarching issues such as the desire to separate fish science/conservation decisions from allocation decisions in the management process, as well as species or location specific issues (i.e., assessments, location of marine reserve);**
- **Evaluate enhancing existing scientific capacity through the creation of a scientific “SWAT team” that can provide quick scientific assistance on important questions.**

Litigation Must Be Strategic

Successful public policy organizations use litigation only as one part of a larger, strategic campaign. Thus, we recommend that organizations:

- **Approach litigation with a great deal more political savvy.**

Funding and Fundraising Must Evolve

Successful public policy organizations have financial stability with multiple sources of income, but fundraising should not consume an inordinate amount of an organization’s time and energy.

Therefore, we recommend that:

- **Charitable foundations consider changing their grant-making cycles, by moving to long-term general support grants with heavy planning up front, but limited reporting before the end of the grant term;**
- **Organizations continue to identify and cultivate additional foundations and individuals that will support ocean conservation;**

- **Charitable foundations and individual donors ensure that ocean conservation organizations implement the recommendations contained in this report.**

A New Challenge

The challenges and opportunities facing the ocean conservation community have never been greater. More than one author has referred to this as “the Decade of the Ocean.” This may be the case, but in what sense? Is this the decade when the collective efforts of conservationists, scientists, concerned ocean users, and policy-makers use the growing recognition and understanding to reverse the decades of neglect to ensure healthy, thriving oceans? Or is it the decade when good intentions rather than effective advocacy stranded the ocean conservation community?

Relative to other environmental issues, ocean conservation is a young movement. All movements on the rise experience growing pains, and the ocean conservation community is no exception. How this period of transition is handled will be critical to future success. Thus, while change is necessary, we recognize the huge potential of the ocean conservation community and equally daunting challenges that lay ahead. Now is the time to repair and reinvigorate this vital effort.

Leaders of the major ocean conservation organizations and programs around the country must acknowledge that meeting these challenges and seizing these opportunities will be exceedingly difficult without significant changes in the current political, public opinion, and organizational climates. If the status quo continues, ocean advocates may win a battle or two, but ultimately lose the war.

We offer these recommendations with a sense of optimism. We believe they can help the ocean conservation community chart a new course in ocean advocacy – a course steeped in the ocean community’s collective dedication, hard work, and victories.

In summary, we are convinced the tide can be turned and that the ocean conservation community will rise to this new challenge. But just as the community is telling policy-makers that bold, new initiatives are needed, the advocacy community also needs to embrace bold changes to move forward. Once embraced, the changes we suggest will help ocean conservationists lead the nation to thriving oceans and ocean-dependent communities.

Background

State of the Oceans

At a time when the world is relying more and more on the oceans for food, we are rapidly diminishing their ability to provide that sustenance. There is no longer any doubt that the oceans are not an inexhaustible resource, but we continue to treat them as if they were. The oceans, though, are not only a source of food. Polluted and stripped of their wildlife, oceans will bestow little of the recreational opportunities and spiritual essence that we now derive from them. Without effective conservation action, these benefits and many others bestowed by the oceans will be all but gone – possibly in only a matter of decades. The consequences are real, and time to implement solutions is short.

As the sophistication of technology has increased, humans have developed the ability to explore and exploit far more of the world's ocean resources. An article in the May 2003 issue of the journal *Nature* demonstrated that, since the advent of modern industrial fishing practices a mere fifty years ago, we have succeeded in removing 90% of the world's large ocean fishes, such all-important food and recreational species as tuna, cod, and marlin.³ Overfishing has decimated the populations of many fish species, and placed countless more at risk. We often see the impact these population declines have on commercial and recreational fishermen and their communities, yet we are only beginning to understand the potentially dramatic impact they are having on entire ocean ecosystems.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), in its *2002 Report to Congress on the Status of the Fisheries of the United States*, reports that 41% of the 237 assessed fish stocks were either overfished (biomass below a sustainable level) or suffering from overfishing (experiencing an unsustainable level of fishing mortality).⁴ As a result, dramatic measures have been required to halt overfishing, including large-scale closures and, in some cases, beginning the long process of rebuilding depleted populations. Moreover, NMFS cannot even assess the health of 695 of the 932 stocks (74.6%) under its jurisdiction.⁵ Instead of using this lack of knowledge to take precautionary action, NMFS continues to allow fishing of those stocks.

Unfortunately, the threat and damage does not stop with overfishing. Indiscriminate fishing has additional impacts such as habitat destruction and the killing of non-target species including juvenile fish, marine mammals, sea birds, turtles, and other wildlife (often referred to as “bycatch”). Huge trawl nets, which drag along the ocean floor, effectively “clear-cut” the sea bottom, destroying the very habitat that fish and other organisms depend on for survival.⁶ These same trawl nets indiscriminately drag up every living creature in their path, frequently resulting in pounds of unwanted bycatch for every pound of targeted fish that is brought to the surface. Pelagic longlines, for example, which consist of miles of baited hooks floating near the surface of the ocean, present a great threat to the continued survival of many species of sea turtles and marine birds such as albatrosses.⁷

While threats from fishing present the greatest risk, they are by no means the only problems facing ocean ecosystems. As the independent Pew Oceans Commission’s final report, *America’s Living Ocean: Charting a Course for a Sea Change* makes clear, coastal development, pollution (from both point sources and nonpoint sources), invasions of exotic species, aquaculture, and climate change have all caused serious degradation of the ocean environment and present significant threats to its well-being.⁸ For example, nitrogen from artificial fertilizers runs off farms and finds its way to rivers, streams, and ultimately estuaries and oceans, where it causes eutrophication and algal blooms, which choke out other marine life. The enormous dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, which appears annually and can reach the size of the state of Massachusetts, is an example of this phenomenon. Cruise ships dump tons of sewage, often untreated, into pristine waters. Fish farms are essentially “floating feedlots” that pollute the coastal waters harboring them. Non-native species introduced in the ballast water of visiting vessels quickly out-compete native flora and fauna, often resulting in profound disturbances to the integrity of ocean ecosystems. Unfortunately, the list goes on and on. Some parts of our oceans already resemble barren deserts compared to their abundance of old and, if these trends continue, they will only get worse.

State of the Ocean Conservation Community

The ability of the ocean conservation community to respond to these threats has increased significantly in the past twenty years, and ocean conservationists have won some important battles that have considerably increased the level of environmental protection for ocean resources. Nevertheless, there is a growing consensus within the ocean advocacy community

that it is not as effective as it could be, and that many of the victories achieved over the last twenty years are in jeopardy. Many within the ocean conservation funding and advocacy communities are seeking to better understand how current and future conservation efforts could be made more effective.

Significant Opportunities and Needs: The need for more effective advocacy on behalf of the oceans is both urgent and timely. Significant opportunities for positive action sit on the horizon. For example, in *America's Living Ocean*, the Pew Oceans Commission calls for “a fundamental change in this nation’s posture toward its oceans” through momentous revisions to our current system of management. The Pew Oceans Commission recommends sweeping changes in ocean governance, establishment of marine reserves, and ecosystem management of marine fisheries. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, another high-level commission that has been reviewing our system of ocean governance, will be releasing its report in late 2003, and it is expected to echo many of the key recommendations of the Pew Commission. Such a broad-scale review of national ocean policy has not been conducted since the 1969 report of the Stratton Commission, which led to the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NMFS, the Coastal Zone Management Act, and, ultimately, the Magnuson Act. Collectively, the commission reports present the ocean conservation community an opportunity to pursue a coordinated, comprehensive agenda (including legislative) that will fundamentally reform this nation’s approach to conservation of the oceans.

Moreover, ocean conservationists are also in the midst of several significant battles. One concerns the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which is responsible for conserving our living marine fish resources and governing the prosecution of commercial and recreational fisheries and is overdue for reauthorization. The commercial fishing industry is pushing numerous measures to weaken the protections established in the 1996 amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (known as the Sustainable Fisheries Act, these amendments were hard-fought and were won by conservationists with critical support and aid from segments of both the commercial and recreational fishing industries). Similarly, many industries, as well as the U.S. Department of Defense, with the blessing of the Bush Administration, are openly attempting to eviscerate the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA), which collectively provide protection for numerous marine species. Currently, ocean advocates find themselves in a defensive posture, and face a very real risk of losing ground.

Significant Growth: Fortunately, conservationists and the funding community are paying increasing attention to the oceans. Twenty-five years ago, only a handful of organizations advocated for ocean conservation, including the Center for Environmental Education (today known as The Ocean Conservancy) and the National Coalition for Marine Conservation. During the past ten years, however, numerous new ocean conservation projects and organizations at the national level, including SeaWeb, Oceana, the Marine Conservation Biology Institute, the Marine Fish Conservation Network, the Ocean Wildlife Campaign, and the Ocean Law Project (OLP) have worked to expand protection for the oceans and their wildlife. Moreover, major national environmental organizations including the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Environmental Defense (ED), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), World Wildlife Fund, and the National Environmental Trust (NET) are devoting resources to ocean conservation programs. In addition, regional organizations specifically devoted to ocean issues, including the Alaska Marine Conservation Council (AMCC) and Pacific Marine Conservation Council (PMCC), have been created to complement the efforts of other regional groups that put a significant amount of resources into ocean conservation, such as the Gulf Restoration Network and Conservation Law Foundation (CLF).

Piece-by-piece, bit-by-bit, the ocean conservation movement has increased its capacity to affect ocean policy, and has continued to add capacity when a need was recognized. SeaWeb was created in the mid 1990s to fill a communication need. While SeaWeb's mission has greatly expanded since its inception, it continues to focus media attention on ocean issues. OLP was created in the late 1990s to supply legal muscle, in particular, for the ongoing fight to force NMFS to properly implement the Magnuson-Stevens Act. AMCC and PMCC were created to address the absence of regional entities in Alaska and the U.S. West Coast, respectively.

In addition to these more traditional public policy-focused conservation efforts, the Marine Stewardship Council was created to attempt to influence consumer behavior (as well as fish buyers and sellers, including grocery stores and restaurants) by certifying fisheries as being sustainably managed. There has been a rapid expansion of consumer campaigns designed to educate the public about the plight of specific fish species and to change their buying habits. This approach "seeks to build private sector support for more responsible ocean policy by harnessing market forces and the power of consumer choice in favor of conservation."⁹ The goal

in this case is not necessarily policy change, but rather giving consumers the opportunity to speak with their wallet and “persuade” chefs, butchers, and processors to factor sustainability into their buying equation.

As encouraging as the growth in organizations is, their capacity and strategies in ocean conservation efforts remain underserved and dwarfed by terrestrial conservation efforts. A survey several years ago by the Pew Charitable Trusts determined that there may be 100 activists working on terrestrial conservation for every one working on protecting the oceans.¹⁰ While our survey indicates that there are at least 200 individuals advocating for the oceans within national and regional organizations in the United States today, the disparity remains virtually the same.

Limited Success: Despite the small size of the ocean conservation community, ocean activists have succeeded in turning this increased funding and focus into some important victories, such as the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996. Other national victories include the BEACH Act (Beaches Environmental Assessment Closure and Health Act), President Clinton’s Executive Order on marine protected areas, and a law prohibiting the finning of sharks in all U.S. waters. Groups also secured important marine protected areas in the Channel Islands and the Dry Tortugas. Conservationists have also won a smattering of victories within the Regional Fishery Management Councils or NMFS and, as a result, select species are better managed or on the road to recovery (or in rare cases, both). Domestic efforts have also been used to accomplish important international victories including reversing dramatic declines of north Atlantic swordfish and implementing a multi-national rebuilding plan.

Despite victories on specific issues, however, the overall trend for ocean conservation cannot be considered positive, as the final Pew Oceans Commission report makes clear. The influence and effectiveness of those who oppose critical conservation measures, including many commercial and recreational fishermen and their organizations, have grown in recent years, both as a result of the prevailing federal and state political climates and because of their improved efforts at organizing, lobbying, and flexing their political muscle. The short-term economic evaluations of proposed conservation measures continue to drive most marine policy debates. Thus, while the threats to the ocean and its wildlife continue to mount, efforts to achieve real and lasting conservation are encountering powerful opposition. Unfortunately, the ocean

conservation community has had trouble countering this resistance, and finds itself increasingly on the defensive.

In short, while the ocean conservation movement has made some important gains, which are all the more impressive given the limited resources devoted to ocean conservation, it will be necessary to significantly increase the effectiveness of ocean conservation efforts if previous wins are to be protected and new victories achieved.

A Search for Solutions

There is a growing consensus within the ocean conservation community that it must be more effective, yet many have questions about how best to accomplish the goal. In order to help answer these important questions, this study set out to identify avenues for increasing the effectiveness of the ocean conservation community in shaping public policies and providing recommendations on their implementation.

As a starting point, lessons can be learned from organizations that have achieved a noteworthy level of success in achieving their public policy goals. Faced with similar circumstances, other organizations found ways to increase their power and influence. Therefore, we started from the presumption that the ocean conservation movement can learn from successful organizations – environmental and non-environmental, progressive, conservative and non-aligned.

We started with the hypothesis that successful organizations must employ a certain set of tools to achieve success and that these tools could be identified. Our hypothesis proved correct. By doing in-depth research on, and interviews with, a mix of organizations (see Organizational Case Studies; Appendices II-IV), we determined that successful organizations employ specific tools or elements almost universally (see Hallmarks of Success). While not every successful organization uses the same mix of tools or in the same proportions, there are certain fundamental ingredients that almost any organization or movement must use if it is to succeed. For this study, “hallmarks of success” are elements that build political power and achieve success. Considering that recreational and commercial fishing industries are experiencing a comparative measure of success relative to ocean conservationists, we also analyzed several of the more successful examples from these groups (see Organizational Case Studies; Appendix IV).

Having identified these hallmarks of success, we next conducted interviews with most of the major national and regional ocean conservation organizations to take stock of their programs and their priorities for the future. By doing so, we determined how these organizations measure up to our hallmarks of success and to identify barriers to success that need to be removed in order to make the ocean conservation movement more effective and ultimately successful (see *How the Ocean Conservation Community Measures Up*). The identification of barriers overlaid with the hallmarks of success led directly to a number of recommendations on how to increase the effectiveness of the movement (see *Recommendations and Conclusion*).

Hallmarks of Success

To identify hallmarks of success, we considered many “successful” organizations and ultimately examined thirteen in detail. We defined successful organizations as those that are able to get and keep the attention of relevant decision-makers. These organizations are consistently able to achieve and/or sustain victories on issues that matter to them. While they might not always win, they win often enough that they cannot be ignored.

Instruments of Success

Hallmarks of success are the tools or elements used by public advocacy organizations or movements to achieve their policy goals and objectives. The integrated use of these complementary strategy elements produces the overarching strategy of an organization. Through our analysis of public advocacy organizations, we identified eight strategy elements that are fundamental to success:

Hallmarks of Success:

- **communication**
- **grassroots/outreach**
- **lobbying**
- **electoral politics**
- **strategic alliances**
- **research**
- **fundraising**
- **litigation**

While each organization does not use every element in all circumstances (or at all in some cases), they use most of them, and they use them well. As the late President Lyndon B. Johnson, one of the most masterful campaigners of the twentieth century, used to say, “If you do *everything*, you will win.”¹¹ So it is with these hallmarks.

When considering the hallmarks of success, it is important to distinguish strategy from tactics. For example, we identify communication – a hallmark of success – as a strategy

element. By contrast, media events and press releases are tactics within a communications strategy.

Communications: The ability to communicate is an essential hallmark of an organization that is effective, influential and impossible to ignore. Public communication is one leg of a four-legged stool that works with grassroots organizing, lobbying, and electoral politics to shape public policy. Communication provides organizations with the ability to mobilize the public and pressure policy-makers. In a world where administration and elected officials respond to public pressure – from the media, voters and constituents – communication is a powerful tool.

Being in the news helps educate people, but most importantly, it puts an issue on the nation's policy agenda. If an issue is *not* in the news, it is *not* recognized by the public as a problem that must be addressed and remedied. The public's perception of what plagues America is determined by what is reported in the newspapers and on the television news. And when close to 80% of Americans get their information from TV news, an issue that is not reported will not capture their attention or spark a public demand for a solution.

To be influential, to roil and shape public opinion and channel public response and grassroots action, organizations must develop messages that are heard and that hit home – literally and figuratively. People are most likely to respond to a problem that threatens them personally – either because of geographical proximity (it affects their own backyard) or because it imperils something they value (their children's health, their natural heritage). To be heard and embraced by the public, influential organizations craft messages that can be understood by their identified targeted audience. Scientific jargon or complicated and technical rationales will not work, because they are not "heard" – they neither reach nor move people. In the context of environmental issues, conservation will not happen unless there is an area of overlap and a piece of common ground where both the public and environmental community each have a stake.

Message development and target audience identification are not intuitive. It requires research. Successful organizations do the necessary research *before* spending time and money to develop their message and strategy. They do not craft a message that they *think* might work and sounds good to *them*, but rather a message that research shows will resonate with and help persuade their target audience to act in the desired fashion. The message of the National Rifle Association (NRA), "*They want to take YOUR gun away,*" is simple and

powerful, but more importantly, it is relevant to its membership and base. This is one of the primary ways the NRA effectively mobilizes its base. It did not happen by accident.

Once a message that will resonate with the target audience is developed, it must be used in a disciplined, consistent and repetitive way in earned and paid media and in all other forms of communications – from direct mail to Congressional testimony to voter education advertisements and candidate advertisements. In 2002, the Sierra Club spent a combined \$10 million on its research-based, message-driven media, education, candidate accountability and PAC activities. The same year, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) spent several million dollars in an attempt (successful in the majority of cases) to turn out voters to defeat anti-environment candidates and elect pro-environment candidates. These communication efforts are limited to organizations with a specific structure (so called “527” organizations and PACs) and will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

Grassroots/Outreach: Once the hearts and minds of the target audience are captured, the organization must be able to do something with them that actually helps it accomplish its goal. Organizing people to take action can be a powerful political force. While technical reports have their place, elected officials are moved by their constituents. Organizations that can organize and mobilize grassroots support by whatever means begin to get the attention of politicians.

Successful organizations can mobilize a base of supporters. While members can be important, an organization’s base often consists of a broader group. The NRA, for example, has a membership of about 4 million, but its base includes most of the estimated 60-65 million U.S. gun owners. Once established, the base serves as a foundation for grassroots and professional lobbying and/or electoral political activities.

We are in a dynamic period for grassroots organizing. At the same time, tried-and-true techniques are re-emerging, and a technology newcomer, the Internet, has burst onto the scene. Groups are rediscovering face-to-face (door-to-door) contact, persuasion, and recruitment. An innovative technique used extensively by U.S. Public Information Research Group (PIRG) and many other groups over the past 30 years is gaining new attention across a wide spectrum of organizations. Following the Republican Party’s success in November 2002, when its one-to-one “72-hour plan” made the difference in getting out the vote, other organizations are crafting related strategies.¹² Personal contact was a fundamental element in

the GOP's 72-hour plan and has been revived as an important tool in building grassroots support.

The Internet has emerged as a tool for growing grassroots involvement. While many organizations have large e-mail lists, few have found ways to actually motivate people to take action. But that's changing. MoveOn.Org, which has pioneered the use of the Internet for grassroots support, has identified 1.4 million interested individuals, raised millions of dollars, and become a force in American politics. It accomplished this feat in just a few short years and all on the Internet with a tiny staff (originally four, now six). Already, MoveOn.Org has inspired other online grassroots efforts, including those of Democratic presidential contender Governor Howard Dean, who has raised millions of dollars and attracted tens of thousands of supporters through an online contact facilitation site called Meetup.org. There is every reason to believe the use of the Internet as a means of mobilizing grassroots power will continue to grow.

Effective organizations pay attention to "servicing" their members and potential members. They recognize that a relationship must be created in order to get action. The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) devotes substantial resources to media relations and communicating with the public, and highlights its media successes with its members. Its state-of-the-art website has a members-only section loaded with articles and links to information available for use only by pilots and plane owners.

Whether through door-to-door personal contact or cyber-contact via the Internet, mobilizing grassroots support and building political influence is increasingly effective, one person and one e-mail at a time.

Lobbying: The key to ultimate success in the public policy arena is political leverage, or political clout with elected officials and key decision-makers. Communication and grassroots support are the foundation for building political strength. But lobbying (grassroots and professional) and direct involvement in the electoral process gives this foundation a voice that makes elected officials willing to listen. Lobbying and political work build the champions of organizations and movements in Washington, D.C., and state capitals around the nation.

Lobbying is as much about relationships and contacts as issues, probably more. The job of a professional lobbyist is to build close relationships with members and staffs on Capitol Hill (or state capitals, depending upon the situation). A lobbyist with a relationship can always bring "issue" people along when needed, but that same issue person will find little traction

without the lobbyist's introduction. The strength of a lobbyist is in his or her relationships. Indeed, a successful lobbying campaign often has little to do with the facts, but instead is a function of the strength of the lobbyist's relationships.

One story in particular highlights how to position a lobbyist for success. A professional lobbyist for one of the successful organizations studied for this report was scheduled to meet a House of Representatives Committee Chairman. For this initial meeting, the lobbyist took along three members of his organization. These three individuals were selected by the lobbyist because they knew the representative. In fact, one was his former campaign manager, another had known him since grade school, and the third had been a friend for many years. When these three trusted colleagues and friends told the representative that he could trust this lobbyist and should listen to what he had to say, it carried weight, not only that day, but in the future when this lobbyist would meet with this Congressman or his staff.

Of course, grassroots lobbying is also highly effective and is necessary to advance an issue when a personal relationship is simply not enough. In this case, an organization must be able to mobilize its activist base to lobby Congress and provide outside pressure.

The NRA attributes its success to an active membership and effective lobbying. It employs only about seven fulltime lobbyists on Capitol Hill, and these lobbyists are, for all practical purposes, the face of the NRA. The NRA's lobbyists form strong personal relationships with lawmakers and their staffs, taking them fishing and to other events, and then stopping off just to say "hello" with a PAC check in hand at the same time that a critical vote is about to happen. Not only are these lobbyists masters of the art, but their job is made easier because lawmakers know the organization is prepared to fire up its public relations machine and activist base so that the lobbying will come from the grassroots support if required.

Electoral Politics: Personal contact lobbying has its limits, even with close relationships with members of Congress and their staff. First, only winners can be lobbied. The presiding Administration, Congress, or governor may not be the preferred contact, but an organization can only lobby those currently in office. The second limitation is accountability. Lobbying doesn't provide an organization with the ability to hold elected officials accountable for their votes and actions. Accountability is about educating people about a politician's record. Involvement in electoral politics allows an organization to play a direct role in who gets elected

and to hold elected officials accountable for their actions. Lobbying provides the voice but electoral involvement insures that the voice will actually be heard.

Electoral politics may be less familiar to many public advocacy organizations, in particular public education or 501(c)(3) organizations, but it is very familiar to the most effective public advocacy organizations. (See Appendix I: Trends in Tax-Exempt Organizations). In fact, electoral politics is the keystone to the success of these organizations. This powerful electoral element is used in at least three ways: (1) voter issue education, by what are known as “527” organizations, including get-out-the vote efforts and issue ads that explain the differences between candidates; (2) direct contributions to candidates, which are allowed by PACs; and (3) independent expenditures, which advocate the election of specific candidates, which can be also be done by PACs. The most effective organizations have the capacity to do all of these, like the Sierra Club and LCV, which are the only environmental organizations that have the full complement of educational, advocacy, and political tools at their disposal.

Successful public policy organizations have political champions. Political champions are cultivated using a variety of tools, but none is more important than electoral involvement. To state the obvious, a champion must first get elected. Getting elected requires turning out voters, and campaigns are expensive. Organizations that understand this reality and couple it with the ability to influence election outcomes find themselves serious players in the political arena. Even a casual observer of today’s leading public policy battles (environmental, reproductive freedom, tax reform) would not question the value of having well-positioned political champions, and the futility of trying to work without them.

There are effective public advocacy organizations that do not participate in electoral politics. How do they accomplish this? Often, organizations without a political component are aligned with organizations that directly participate in the electoral process. For example, LCV is one of the top political voices for the national environmental movement and the only environmental organization devoted fulltime to shaping a pro-environment Congress and White House. Thus, 501(c)(3) organizations such as NRDC and ED, which are not organized to participate in this type of political activity, depend to a large extent upon LCV to provide their political voice. Strong strategic alliances can make this option a viable strategy.

There are organizations that, while effective, recognize that they would be more effective if they had a political and electoral presence. Planned Parenthood resisted adding a political component to its organization for many years, yet decided it would be more effective

by creating a political entity and program, which it has done effectively. U.S. PIRG, which we consider a successful organization, has acknowledged that it would likely be more effective if it had a PAC (the ability to endorse and support candidates). Thus, PIRG Pennsylvania is experimenting with a political organization to assess its feasibility.

Many public policy organizations intentionally do not participate in electoral politics for philosophical, legal, or other reasons. This does *not* preclude them from being an important player in their community, but it does make it more difficult and requires creative solutions to secure a political voice. Obviously, this vulnerability is magnified when no organization in an entire community or movement has the ability to hold politicians accountable and participate in the electoral process.

Strategic Alliances: Building bridges to other organizations and movements may be necessary to advance an organizational agenda. Many of the organizations we analyzed formed formal or informal alliances for a variety of reasons. One obvious reason is strength in numbers. The larger a coalition, the more political pressure that can be brought to bear and the greater the chances of success.

Another reason is to fill a gap. An organization that has a good idea of its strengths and weaknesses will frequently recognize that it makes more sense to partner with a second organization that is strong where the first is weak. Of course, the first organization must have something to offer the second for the alliance to be really fruitful. This type of alliance building signals excellent focus by an organization because it demonstrates a recognition and willingness to do a limited number of things well, rather than trying to do so many things that nothing is fully successful.

Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), a right-wing organization founded and led by Grover Norquist, has built a grassroots taxpayers' movement by working with approximately 800 groups. Together they work to get members of Congress, state legislators, and governors to pledge support for a system in which "taxes are simpler, fairer, more visible, and lower than they are today." Their synergy has resulted in, at present, 212 U.S. representatives, 37 U.S. senators, and the President of the United States signing the pledge. Mr. Norquist also hosts his "Wednesday meetings" where for the past decade he has brought together wide-ranging, right-wing interests to strategize on issues of the moment. He brings in lobbyists, funders, elected officials, media, and others all for the purpose of building strategic alliances that will

help him advance his agenda. Everyone who is someone in the right-wing community (or wants to be) works to get invited to the Wednesday meeting.

In some cases, strategic alliances provide credibility and a political constituency. The At-Sea Processors Association (APA), a trade association representing 8 companies whose 19 Seattle-based fishing vessels (factory trawlers) work Alaskan waters, eliminated a significant weakness by forging an alliance with Alaska Native corporations, which were in the process of gaining a stake in the Bering Sea groundfish fishery. By doing so, these “Outside” vessels became an Alaskan political constituent and greatly increased their political might.

Research: Research, whether physical, natural, or social, provides an organization with the information it needs to make strategic decisions. As a starting point, an organization needs to understand the places, organisms, or people for which it is working to change public policy. This information can be used to make data-driven internal (organizational focus) and external (science-based policies and messaging) decisions.

No single model captures the variety of ways public policy organizations gather their information. Some organizations rely on technical and scientific staff to perform research or analyses in-house, while others depend upon independent organizations, universities, or government agencies. Whether in-house or external, this information can introduce and frame completely new issues, support or advance current paradigms, or overturn current theories. Economics and social science information, which introduces the human element, are a critical component of research needs.

While physical, natural or economic information is valuable and, in some cases, essential to inform an organization’s policy positions and provide credibility, not all organizations require it for success. Strongly ideological organizations, such as the NRA or the “Right to Life” movement, have a view and stick to it. They focus on their core beliefs and do not get lost in subtleties. The environmental community, for a number of reasons, represents the opposite extreme as it seeks, defends and highlights scientific credibility.

In other cases, simply doing research and understanding the science may *not* be enough. Successful organizations often need to ensure that they are recognized as an authoritative source of information. For example, U.S. PIRG performs cutting-edge research and carefully packages and distributes it to the desired audience (in most cases, the media). The media knows and trusts PIRG reports and therefore provides coverage. The Chesapeake Bay

Foundation (CBF) has created a similar environment. When a science question about the Chesapeake Bay is raised, the media asks, “What does CBF have to say?”

Whether or not they need research on the scientific foundation of their policy issues, successful organizations all research and understand the people they are trying to influence and persuade. Attitudinal and political opinion polling is vital. It is difficult to capture public attention, alter public opinion, or spark public outcry and action unless their beliefs, values, and persuasibility are understood at the outset. Accordingly, many successful organizations spend considerable time, energy, and money working to understand the people they need to influence, including what they think, feel and want. Political parties and candidates have recognized the value of this tool and exploit it to its limits. Public policy organizations, especially those that structure their efforts as campaigns, are also good at doing this research and effectively using the results. Political consultant and strategist Joel Bradshaw often reminds clients to “start where they are, not where you are.” Of course, the only way to “start where they are” is to know where they are, and in order to know where they are, an organization must do the appropriate research. Understanding people and the ability to change and shape their opinions comes from asking the right questions and listening to the answers.

Fundraising: Successful organizations have the resources they need to accomplish their goals. Money drives both the quality and quantity of the work of an organization – money supports the need for adequate staff and other resources to carry out the work. All of the successful organizations we looked at have big budgets, adequate to do the work they are trying to accomplish. In some cases, they have narrowed the scope of their work in order to have adequate money to do what they do well. In addition, an organization’s ability to raise money has long been a measure of its credibility and strength.

Successful organizations adapt, often quickly, to changing circumstances. The McCain-Feingold campaign finance law dramatically altered the financial political landscape. Current restrictions on political parties and elected officials regarding raising unlimited “soft money” donations has led to the formation of dozens, more likely hundreds, of soft-money organizations. This shift is designed to try to capture some of the hundreds of millions of soft-money donations.

The Internet, which the *Washington Post* called “the fastest growing resource in U.S. politics,” is also playing a larger role in fundraising. MoveOn.Org, which raised \$2.4 million in

2000 and \$4 million in 2002, all via cyberspace, has set a goal of \$100 million for 2004, according to Executive Director Peter Schurman. While the Internet has received a great deal of media attention recently, and certainly holds promise for certain organizations, most money is still raised the old-fashioned way – by personal solicitation.

Litigation: As part of an integrated strategy, lawsuits have the potential to play both offensive and defensive roles. Offensive litigation seeks to use the legal system as the primary vehicle to assert new rights, as in the fights for privacy rights and school desegregation. The best offensive litigation usually has its basis in the Constitution, however, and there are therefore limited opportunities to bring true offensive litigation in the environmental arena.

Nevertheless, a coordinated campaign of litigation, even if it is primarily a defensive attempt to force the government to comply with the law protecting a species or a place, can draw important media attention to an issue, and serve as an important tool to educate the public and put pressure on political leaders. The litigation over the spotted owl in the Pacific Northwest is a good example of defensive litigation. It succeeded in increasing the pressure on an issue to the point that it drew the attention of President Clinton and resulted in a political solution that stopped much of the logging in federal forests in the region.

In order to succeed in the long run, lawsuits must be accompanied by an effective campaign that anticipates the political backlash and is prepared to deal with it. Reliance on lawsuits on their own is extremely risky because legal victories can be easily overturned in Congress. Litigation thus is not an end in itself, but is only one tool that must be integrated with a much larger strategy if it is to succeed. The Coastal Conservation Association (CCA), which successfully helped defend several drift gillnet bans in state waters, serves as a good example. CCA prepared for the likely need to defend these bans in court before it even launched the efforts to enact them, and incorporated that need into its overarching strategy from the beginning.

Most successful organizations are prepared to go to court if necessary in order to assert their rights. To fail to do so in the proper situation sends the message that the organization will not fight to defend its principles, and successful organizations always try to avoid appearing weak. While most successful organizations are judicious in their use of litigation, it is a hallmark that says the organization means business.

Designing a Winning Strategy

The 8 identified hallmarks of success provide an impressive suite of complementary tools. Most public advocacy organizations can only imagine using *all* of these, yet the challenge remains to design a winning strategy. Based on our knowledge of the leadership within the organizations we evaluated, a few guiding principles emerged.

Connect all of the Components: Successful organizations run campaigns or follow a general campaign strategy. They have a plan with identified goals, including an end game, tactics, and a timetable to follow with benchmarks. If a weakness or gap is identified, a solution is identified before moving forward. Multiple likely outcomes are anticipated and contingencies developed for each. There should be few, if any, surprises.

See the Big Picture: Organizations that understand what it takes to achieve specific goals and connect outputs to outcomes are more likely to succeed.

Keep Disciplined and Focused: Once an organization has made a strategic decision and correctly identified places where it can win, it is far more likely to succeed. This includes limiting message and limiting focus, like the CBF, whose mission is to “Save the Bay,” yet it has decided not to focus on pesticides. Recognizing that no organization can be all things to all people is an essential first step in building a strategic campaign. Following that recognition, it is then essential to stick with the strategic decision and not become distracted by other issues. Failure to stay focused has been the downfall of many a campaign and organization.

Win Often: Our definition of success stated that an organization “might not always win...”; however, it must win enough. The organizations with a strong winning record are those that have clout. Importantly, when an organization wins, it must be recognized for it. This is not about an organization trying to beat the competition. This is about elected officials and policy makers understanding who contributed to their winning hand. The goal is to ensure that the next time around the politician wants to be on *your* organization’s side from the start.

Leverage Unique Strengths. CBF concentrating on the Chesapeake Bay is a perfect example. By focusing on a natural feature that defines the state, CBF has succeeded in making

the protection of the Bay the third rail of politics in Maryland. This did not happen accidentally. CBF exploited a unique opportunity and over 30 years has grown it into a major strength. Just ask one of the many Bay-area politicians who are CBF members.

Be Opportunistic: If a moment in time presents itself, do not miss it. Karl Rove recognized the virtually untapped potential of direct mail in the early 1980s before other political strategists and used that insight to position the Republican Party to do the impossible and take control of the state of Texas, and ultimately, the country.¹³ Similarly, the Christian Coalition and many of its leaders recognized the potential of cable television in the late 1970s and early 1980s and in a very short time parlayed a vocal and dedicated viewing public into a powerful political machine. There are similar opportunities available today. Perhaps it is the Internet, perhaps it is something else. What those opportunities are, it is a sure bet that someone will identify and exploit them.

Organizational Case Studies

When we looked for organizations that merited detailed study, we defined success as being able to get and keep the attention of relevant decision-makers. We looked for organizations that consistently achieve and/or sustain victories on issues that matter to them and, while they might not always win, cannot be ignored.

There are, of course, many organizations around the country that fit these criteria, and so it was necessary to narrow our search even further, in order to have a manageable and useful set of case studies. Our goal was to look at a set of organizations that represented a fair cross-section of both environmental and non-environmental groups, of progressive and conservative causes. We also felt it was important to study a few recreational and commercial fishing industry organizations. These groups seem to be having a fair measure of success in the areas of marine reserves establishment and regulation of fishing – two areas that are highly important to the ocean conservation community and where current ocean policy action is concentrated. We prepared a list of groups that we felt fit these criteria, and also solicited input from leaders of ocean conservation programs around the country.

We began eliminating groups to come up with a manageable set, always with an eye towards learning lessons that would be most relevant to the ocean conservation community. For example, while AARP was universally regarded as extremely successful, we decided not to study it because its enormous constituency dwarfs anything the ocean conservation community can ever reasonably hope to achieve. This constituency devolves to it solely as a function of the aging process; its success is therefore not reproducible.

Similarly, we chose not to look at Tobacco Free Kids because, while successful, it deals with two issues – children and health – that are such major “hot buttons” for a such a huge segment of the populace that its success has little likelihood of translating well to conservation of the oceans, which is unlikely to hold such a place in the public consciousness anytime soon.

We eliminated the National Abortion Rights Action League because its success largely comes down to defending the continued viability of a court decision – *Roe v. Wade* – and because abortion rights have become such an iconic struggle. Additional equally successful organizations were omitted for similar reasons.

Finally, we decided against the National Federation of Independent Businesses because the business community has such inherent political strength that, with the exception of commercial fishing organizations, we did not believe that studying trade organizations would yield a wealth of useful information for ocean conservationists.

Many in the ocean conservation community were interested in learning more about the fight to save the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), given the long-term success of the coalition to prevent oil-drilling there and some attractive parallels to ocean issues – a remote natural area that few people are likely to visit or spend much time in. However, we decided not to examine it in detail for a number of reasons. Since the 1950s, when President Eisenhower neglected to designate ANWR as protected wilderness, it has been elevated to “metaphor” status for all special places. No one place has had so many organizations, so much money, and so much time dedicated to its survival, or loss. It stands for ALL places, and is the pinnacle of the argument on both sides. ANWR is the biggest stage both sides have, the place to make the case for conservation or resource management of our public lands. It is a fight that could never be over for precisely these reasons: loss means giving up so much more than a place. Because this case is such an anomaly and on such a grand scale, we decided that studying it in detail would provide little value to the ocean conservation community.

We also decided to study organizations, rather than whole movements, for a number of reasons. First, trying to accurately describe the nuances of a single organization’s success in a study of this scope is difficult enough. In most cases, a study would have to be book-length to do justice to something as large as a movement. We also felt that, in many cases, certain organizations served as fairly good surrogates for the movements of which they are a part. Finally, individual organizations will have to make the changes recommended in this report, and therefore it is most useful for them to see how other similarly situated organizations have achieved their success.

The organizations we ultimately examined in detail are grouped as follows:
Five organizations from various parts of the political spectrum that are not involved in environmental work:

- the National Rifle Association (NRA),
- MoveOn.org,
- the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA),
- the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), and

- Americans for Tax Reform (ATR).

Four organizations that work on environmental issues:

- Sierra Club,
- League of Conservation Voters (LCV),
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), and
- U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG),

Four that represent recreational and commercial fishing interests:

- Coastal Conservation Association (CCA),
- Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA),
- At-Sea Processors Association (APA), and
- National Fisheries Institute (NFI).

These organizations have a combination of effectiveness and structure that we believe are highly instructive to the ocean conservation community. Collectively, these groups represent the full range of tools available to advocacy organizations and movements and provide models that can be emulated. By studying and replicating their structure, operations, and approach to advocacy, we believe that the ocean conservation community can achieve a far higher level of effectiveness in the public policy arena and, in the end, a far higher level of protection for America's ocean resources.

Detailed case studies of each of these organizations are included in this report in Appendices II-IV. Below we offer brief descriptions of the groups and why they were chosen for this report, as well as the lessons we believe these groups hold for the ocean conservation community.

National Rifle Association: *A Laser-Like Focus Zeroes in on Success*

The NRA was mentioned as being effective by numerous leaders of other organizations who were interviewed for this project. Almost universally, they identified the NRA as one of the most effective organizations in the country, even if they profoundly disagreed with its positions, and expressed a keen interest in knowing how it was able to consistently win on issue after issue. The NRA attributes its success to a large and active membership, as well as an effective lobbying organization. As former Clinton political aide George Stephanopoulos said, "Let me

make one small vote for the NRA. They're good citizens. They call their Congressmen. They write. They vote. They contribute. And they get what they want over time."¹⁴

The NRA is primarily a membership organization, with about 4 million members. It has an affiliated 501 (c)(4), the Institute for Legislative Action, an affiliated PAC, The NRA Political Victory Fund, and a separate affiliated 501 (c)(3), The NRA Foundation, Inc.

The NRA succeeds by being focused with laser-like intensity on a single issue, which allows it to keep its message simple. That message is, "They want to take YOUR gun away." This message resonates almost universally with gun-owners. As a result, its base includes not just its 4 million card-carrying members, but the estimated 60-65 million gun-owners in this country. By knowing how to talk to its base, the NRA is able to incite their passions and motivate them to action. This grassroots support is then easily translated into electoral and lobbying success. And no organization lobbies better. The fulltime lobbyists of the NRA spend all their time cultivating members of Congress, who respond because they know that a vote against the NRA will cost them come election time. Our analysis revealed that the NRA excelled at all eight hallmarks. They do it all and they do it well.

MoveOn.org: The Internet as a Political Force

Money raised has long been the measure of a political candidate or organization's credibility and strength. The amount of cash on hand is the traditional gauge used to separate serious contenders from the pack and the time-honored way to gain political influence has been to buy it. But the metrics might be changing, largely because of the Internet – what the *Washington Post* called, "the fastest growing resource in U.S. politics."¹⁵ MoveOn.org pioneered the use of the Internet as a tool for growing grassroots involvement in democracy and is quickly becoming a force in American politics.

MoveOn.org was created in Berkeley, California in 1998 by two married software entrepreneurs, Wes Boyd and Joan Blades. The organization designed to generate web-based grassroots activism now has 1.4 million members. Boyd and Blades started MoveOn.org when Congress was pre-occupied with the impeachment of Bill Clinton – an issue they felt was not important to Americans. The founders of MoveOn.org sent e-mails to a hundred friends asking Congress to censure the President and to move on. This message was then passed on to thousands more. By honing this technique, MoveOn.org has become the newest star in American politics, and with a staff of only six.

Apart from seeing the potential of the Internet and capitalizing on it better than anyone else, the key to MoveOn's success has been to position itself in the mainstream – especially in terms of language and tactics. Its messages are solutions-oriented, not partisan, shrill or personal. MoveOn excels at translating topline rhetoric into action, not into a more profound appreciation of the issue. MoveOn's staff has noted an indirect ratio between the number of syllables in a word and the likelihood of someone taking action – the more syllables, the less likely the action. By finding the message and the tools to get people to act, MoveOn.org has captured the attention of politicians, and they are responding.

Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association: *Professionalism and Member Services Make This Organization Soar*

AOPA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to general aviation that has approximately 390,000 members. And it is its emphasis on member service that distinguishes and defines AOPA as a successful and influential policy-shaping organization. The AOPA offers its members training, information in many forms about administration and congressional action affecting airplanes and airports, and opportunities to weigh-in on legislation and contribute to its political action committee. By mastering the technique of communicating with its membership, AOPA fosters the type of connection that leads to action.

In its efforts to sway the legislative and executive branches of the federal government, AOPA uses an integrated advocacy strategy with a formidable array of complementary weapons. AOPA maintains a multi-million dollar lobbying staff, backed up by sizable contributions from its PAC to all the relevant players on the House and Senate aviation subcommittees. The organization is so deeply intertwined with the Federal Aviation Administration that it has remarkable success in getting the agency to do its bidding.

AOPA is very effective at connecting with the people it lobbies, many of whom are involved with small aircraft either as pilots or frequent flyers. Finding a way to connect to the audience, i.e. legislators, is key. AOPA also uses its PAC to augment, rather than replace, its other efforts. And, finally, it effectively works to get its own members elected to public office, thus creating instant champions, rather than spending its time trying to persuade undecided

legislators. The AOPA embodies the elements of the four-legged stool – communications, grassroots support, lobbying, and electoral politics.

American Federation of Government Employees: A *Powerful Entity within a Larger Powerhouse*

AFGE is the largest federal employee union, representing 600,000 federal and D.C. government workers nationwide and overseas. Workers in virtually all functions of government at every federal agency depend upon AFGE for legal representation, legislative advocacy, technical expertise, and informational services.

AFGE was chosen for examination because, when discussing political power at the federal level, it is impossible not to consider the labor movement. In addition, much like ocean conservation groups, which are a small, distinct subset of environmentalists not always recognized by policy makers as different from the overall environmental community (despite their unique perspectives, challenges and issue focus), the AFGE forms a distinct subset of what appears to policy makers to be the monolithic powerful labor movement.

In order to get out of the shadow of the larger labor movement, it has been critical for AFGE to build its own relationships, its own identity and its own clout, so as not to be brushed aside in the issues that the AFL-CIO sets as top priorities. In addition, AFGE has learned to maximize its effectiveness by building and supporting champions on key committees. It uses PAC money to open the door to its effective lobbyist. Its lobbyist has built strong relationships with the staff and members on the key committees. And finally, it backs up its lobbying with a legislative scorecard and with strong grassroots pressure from its members.

Americans for Tax Reform: *Using Alliances to Roll Back the Twentieth Century*

Though Grover Norquist's official title is president of the right-wing group, ATR, the *Wall Street Journal* more accurately called him "the V.I. Lenin of the anti-tax movement."¹⁶ This organization is not a typical advocacy organization, but rather is a vehicle for Grover Norquist as he moves an agenda. His plan, which began in the 1980s and extends to 2040, is to drastically shrink the size of government by cutting taxes to the point that huge numbers of government programs, particularly those associated with the New Deal, must be defunded and

scrapped. While many find ATR's agenda alarming, there can be no question that it has had enormous recent success in implementing its vision, and it was selected for that reason.

ATR is best known for its "Taxpayer Protection Pledge," which has become a core commitment for GOP politicians. The pledge "asks all candidates for federal and state office to commit themselves in writing to oppose all tax increases." ATR serves as a national clearinghouse for the grassroots taxpayers' movement by working with approximately 800 state- and county-level groups to ask candidates for state legislature and governor in all 50 states to sign the State Taxpayer Protection Pledge.

What ATR demonstrates more than any other group we examined is the power of strategic alliances. What has catapulted Norquist to the top ranks of the Republican Party's elite is his ability to unite various right-wing interests. In fact, *Wall Street Journal* editorial board member John Fund described Norquist as "the Grand Central Station" of conservatism because "all the trains run through his office."¹⁷ Norquist has brought the disparate forces of what he calls a "center-right coalition" together on a weekly basis for roughly a decade. His regular Wednesday meetings have been the place to be for right-wing lobbying groups ever since the GOP takeover of Congress in 1995. Representatives from the White House, the House and Senate leaderships and the Republican National Committee join the broad coalition of right-wing and business groups to make sure all parties are working together. Reporters and editors from right-wing media outfits are also regular attendees, rounding out the right-wing network. As can be seen in the general unanimity and success with which conservatives have pursued their agenda, there is tremendous value in alliances and coordination at this level.

Sierra Club: Grassroots: Media and Political Involvement Equals Influence

The Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. Since its founding by naturalist John Muir in 1892, the Sierra Club has embraced political action – direct lobbying, grassroots organizing and media outreach to raise public awareness, influence legislation and most recently, election outcomes. The Sierra Club has over 700,000 members, 65 chapters and 450 local groups. In the 2003-2004 election cycle, the Sierra Club will be using a combination of 501 (c)(3), 501 (c)(4), PAC and 527 efforts to stop anti-environmental candidates.

The Sierra Club is one of the few environmental organizations, along with the LCV, that has the full complement of education, political, and advocacy tools at its disposal. In order to amplify its efforts and enlist new allies for environmental causes, the Sierra Club has invested heavily in media training and outreach at the local and national levels. The Sierra Club believes the combination of its political and media work gives it power and influence over policy and that its media and lobbying work enhance its political effectiveness and influence.

One thing the Sierra Club demonstrates is that, if earning influence is the goal, it helps to be big – to have hundreds of thousands of members, millions of dollars, and a sophisticated operation willing to take risks. But it has taken more than a century for the Sierra Club to gain its present prominence as a premier political power in the progressive movement and no group can expect to exert its influence overnight. Regardless of its size, though, the fact the Sierra Club has the whole mix of tools allows the organization to use its influence in many arenas and this, more than anything, is the secret to its success.

League of Conservation Voters: *Bringing Together Environmental Groups for a Greater Political Voice*

LCV calls itself “the political voice of the national environmental movement” and is the only organization devoted fulltime to shaping a pro-environment Congress and White House. LCV runs tough and effective campaigns to defeat anti-environment candidates, and support those leaders who stand up for a clean, healthy future for America. Through the *National Environmental Scorecard* and *Presidential Report Card*, they hold Congress and the Administration accountable for their actions on the environment. The LCV family of organizations includes LCV (both 501(c)(4) and 527), LCV Action Fund (PAC), LCV Accountability Project (another 501(c)(4)), and LCV Education Fund (501(c)(3)).

LCV has carefully carved an extremely specific niche, which is very D.C.-centric, and firmly within the mainstream national environmental community. This niche is about clout. The clout is based on the *Scorecard*, on letters to the Hill, and these are backed up by the clout of the hard dollar independent expenditures and the PAC. PAC money and politics adds a dimension to the power of LCV, so that Congressional staff care more about receiving a letter from LCV than they do from, say, PIRG, even though PIRG has more substance and credibility on the issues. Other groups know the Hill staff better, and the ins and outs of policy, but they are not recognized as bringing opinion leaders and voters with them to the table.

LCV demonstrates the importance of engaging in electoral politics in order to get traction on environmental issues in Congress. LCV does so by focusing on issues that emphasize the differences between those who favor the environment and those who do not (i.e., “wedge” issues). When scoring votes, LCV’s policy is to pick the most important floor votes, in which a real difference between points of view can be seen. By consistently sticking to this strategy, LCV gains the confidence of the public and the respect of legislators, who know that a good LCV score can mean the difference in a tight election.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation: *Turning a Beloved Natural Treasure into Political Power*

It is rare to find a single environmental nonprofit that has such power and respect in state capitals and with federal elected officials within its region of influence. In Maryland, issues around the Chesapeake Bay are perceived as being the third rail of politics, and this is largely due to the efforts of CBF. Few organizations in this country have done a better job of organizing around and protecting a saltwater resource.

CBF is a 501(c)(3) organization and has been in existence for 35 years. Its leaders credit this longevity, combined with its large and active membership, for some of its power and thus its effectiveness. In addition, it has a good Board of Directors, an awe-inspiring development program, and the president has his own family foundation. CBF is able to mobilize its 110,000 members effectively and rapidly, and it has built for a body of water an ethic of respect and affection that is imbued deeply in the sense of what it means to live in Maryland and Virginia, in particular.

CBF focuses on what it is good at, building a Bay-oriented ethic among generations of people and science-based advocacy. It aggressively builds both its membership and its activist core, which enhances its power and effectiveness. CBF has become so powerful, especially in Maryland and Virginia, that it usually wins – even in the face of daunting budget cuts, but CBF leaders understand that success breeds success and that, at times, it is important to compromise to move an issue forward and to continue being perceived as an effective, winning organization. Moreover, its leaders recognize the importance of electoral politics and have formed a close alliance with the Maryland League of Conservation Voters as a result.

U.S. Public Interest Research Group: *Research and Grassroots: Powerful Political Weapons*

We chose U.S. PIRG because it has become a powerful force shaping state and national policy and legislation, but has done so without either a PAC or a 527. This fact alone makes PIRG something of an anomaly among powerful Washington, D.C.-based organizations and worthy of study.

U.S. PIRG was created by the State PIRGs in 1983 to “act as a watchdog for the public interest in the nation’s capitol.” The state PIRGs were founded by Ralph Nader in 1971 as a network of campus-based, student-funded organization.

PIRG has two primary strengths: its reports – what Executive Director Gene Karpinski calls “groundbreaking” research that is carefully packaged for the media, written in language designed to be understood and persuasive; and its grassroots organizing. PIRG’s door-to-door canvassing has allowed the organization to raise money, educate the public, grow support and spark citizen action. Ironically, this year’s hot new political grassroots tactic – face-to-face contact and recruitment – has been PIRG’s bread and butter for decades.

While PIRG has been a strong force shaping environmental, consumer and good government policy and law for years, the head of the organization believes the organization would be even more effective if it had a greater political and electoral presence. Recognizing that its lack of political and electoral vehicles means it can only go so far with its ability to sway or hold a public official accountable, PIRG is experimenting by splitting its Pennsylvania organization into two – and allowing one to do political work.

Coastal Conservation Association: *Coordinated Campaigns Give Clout to Recreational Fishermen*

CCA is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) that is active in virtually every national fisheries debate. CCA fights for “the health and longevity of our coastal fisheries and for recreational anglers’ interests in them.” It is a loose-knit confederation of 175 chapters in 15 different states with 85,000 members. The membership is made up of recreational anglers and sport fishermen. While it has a small and inactive PAC, many of its members are politically active and make significant political contributions.

CCA was founded in the Gulf of Mexico region in the late 1970s in response to a crisis with redfish (dramatic overfishing and declines). The organization has a presence up the

Atlantic coast and into New England; however, it remains particularly well-connected and powerful in the Gulf of Mexico, where four of the five governors in the region are CCA members.

CCA has learned the importance of having individual members contribute to political campaigns, which helps provide the access the organization needs. The organization also uses the relationships that members have with important politicians and decision-makers to reinforce long-term personal contact lobbying by professionals (Congress and state legislatures), as well as long-term relationships with regulatory agencies (state and federal). This is all reinforced by its public education and outreach efforts. The coordinated campaigns that result from all of these tools almost always achieve the political clout CCA needs to succeed.

Recreational Fishing Alliance: Angling for Success by Working Capitol Hill

RFA is a nonprofit 501(c)(4) with a connected PAC. RFA also has a separate nonprofit 501(c)(3) that supports research. An active player in most national fisheries debates and many state-level issues, RFA has 35,000 dues-paying members with another 50,000-70,000 “affiliated” members (members of sport clubs or other organizations affiliated with RFA). The membership is made up of recreational anglers, boat and tackle manufacturers, and fishing clubs. RFA protects the interests of anglers, including their ability to fish, and proclaims to be “Your voice on Capitol Hill.”

Founded less than a decade ago, RFA proposed from the beginning that the problems facing recreational anglers were political in nature and would require a political solution. Its mission statement begins “Create a national grassroots, political action organization to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers” It is structured in a way that it can endorse/oppose candidates and participate in unlimited lobbying. This makeup was intentional, as its founders believed a 501(c)(3) structure would be too “restrictive.”

RFA uses a full suite of political tools to build political champions who will introduce legislation for it and block legislation it opposes. Its strength comes from a mix of limited electoral involvement, personal-contact lobbying, and the ability to mobilize its base. RFA has a constant presence on Capitol Hill, state legislatures, and federal agencies, and this presence pays off in policy success.

At-Sea Processors Association: *Strategic Alliances Diffuse Opposition*

APA is a trade association representing eight companies that collectively own nineteen factory trawlers participating in the groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea. While they fish in Alaska, almost all of these boats are home-ported in Seattle, Washington.

Much of APA's success can be attributed to the fact that it recognized early on that it needed to turn a faceless, Seattle-based industrial fishery into "a political constituent in the State of Alaska" and crafted a political strategy to make that happen. This was a priority from the beginning of its existence. A major component of this strategy was to forge a strategic alliance with Alaska Native corporations, which were in the process of gaining a share of the fishery through a federal program. As a result, Alaska Native groups now own about 40% of the factory trawl fleet, which gives this industry real political power in the State of Alaska.

APA succeeds through a combination of strategic alliances, hiring the right people, like the former fisheries aide to Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), and spending its money to get what it needs, be it legislation or science. In addition, APA has developed an acute sense of public relations, creating good will where needed by reaching out strategically into the community and diffusing potential opposition.

National Fisheries Institute: *Cultivating Champions From the Inside Out*

NFI is a trade association that represents more than 800 firms in the fishing industry. These firms range from small, family-owned businesses to large multi-national corporations. It is the primary trade association representing the commercial fishing industry. NFI practices a classical form of trade association politics, mixing modest political donations, long-term personal contact lobbying, long-term relationships with regulatory agencies, and public education and outreach. In doing so, NFI runs an annual lobbying day for members every year, "Fly-in for Fish," which includes events like a softball game between NFI people (the NFI Fishmongers) and Congressional staff (the Capitol Fish Heads.)

NFI provides these important relationship-building opportunities for its individual members with members of Congress, and with Congressional staff. NFI effectively makes the people-jobs connection. This helps persuade members of Congress that supporting NFI's agenda

is truly benefiting people (and jobs) in their districts. This contention is reinforced when a member receives strong constituent support for introducing or supporting a pro-NFI legislative item (and little or no constituent opposition).

NFI demonstrates that, when applied strategically, an “insiders” approach can be effective. Participating in electoral politics, even at a limited level, shows elected officials that an organization understands the game and is willing to play. When reinforced with grassroots lobbying, again even at a limited level, properly selected elected officials can become true champions. At the end of the day, NFI has champions – not enough to always get its way, but enough to advance significant parts of its agenda and to prevent regulations and legislation it opposes.

How the Ocean Conservation Community Measures Up

While the overall trend for the health of oceans is downward, there is no question that in recent years the ocean conservation community has increased its ability to address this problem. As detailed in the introduction to this report, the last ten years have seen a large increase in the number of organizations, program staff and amount of resources dedicated to protecting our living ocean resources. At the same time, the ocean conservation community must move to the next level if it is to effectively counter the twin challenges presented by an increase in exploitation of the oceans and the political backlash fomented by those who exploit them.

Moving up to the next level will require a willingness to learn from other organizations that have achieved a noteworthy level of success in their area of concentration. This is the value of the organizational case studies: the lessons they can provide the ocean conservation community in its quest to continually improve both the effectiveness of its advocacy and the health of the oceans. To adequately make recommendations about what the ocean conservation community should do to achieve these goals, we needed a comprehensive assessment of the ocean conservation community. Thus, we evaluated the organizations in the community using our hallmarks of success as our benchmarks.

For this review, the ocean conservation community is defined broadly to include the universe of organizations working on saltwater issues in the United States. Our assessment is broadly applicable to all of them. The exceptions, of course, are groups like CBF that are specifically singled out. However, because of the greater difficulty involved in doing bluewater and fisheries work, we tended to focus more on groups that work on these issues, rather than those focused primarily on estuarial or coastal issues, for example. For a complete list of the groups interviewed for this project, see Appendix V.

In general, the ocean conservation community has good capacity and skills in some of the hallmark areas (scientific research and science-driven policy, litigation, and fundraising), while others are less developed (outreach/grassroots, communications, lobbying, strategic alliances, political and attitudinal research, campaign focus), and some are non-existent (electoral process).

Capacities and Skills of the Ocean Conservation Community

The ocean conservation community has good capacity and skills in the areas of scientific research and science-driven policy, litigation, and fundraising, although improvements can be made in each area.

Scientific Research and Science-Driven Policy: The ocean conservation community has succeeded in using science (a sub-component of the research hallmark) to: (1) identify important conservation needs; and (2) guide policy decisions. Seeing potential or existing problems, as well as novel solutions, as early as possible increases the likelihood of success. While the ocean community does little original ocean conservation research, it synthesizes and frames issues to promote advocacy.

Bottom trawling is a good example. In 1996, when Drs. Elliott Norse and Les Watling organized a scientific workshop to evaluate the ecological impacts of bottom trawling, they had a difficult time identifying 15 participants. At the time, the only interested parties were scientists who studied benthic habitat. Following a successful workshop, the organizers published the workshop papers in the well-respected scientific journal *Conservation Biology* and organized significant outreach to conservationists and the media. The workshop and follow-up actions have had a dramatic effect. In 2002, only six years later, NOAA held a conference on the same subject attended by 450 people. Today, several leading ocean conservation organizations have major campaigns focusing on bottom trawling. Other examples of individuals or organizations recognizing and highlighting problems and solutions to successfully stimulate advocacy efforts include the use of marine reserves and the conservation of the ocean's giant fishes—sharks, swordfish, and bluefin tuna.

In many ways, the conservation community's credibility hinges on being able to back up its positions with science. The ocean conservation community has had to build a solid scientific case for virtually every single policy change it has advocated. Overall, the community has performed well. There are few instances where an issue failed solely because of the science, as opposed to a federal agency or elected official using uncertainty in the science as their excuse not to act, and there are many examples where sound, proactive science paved the way for policy change.

These successes have been achieved using a combination of in-house expertise, hired consultants and formal and informal partnerships with independent scientists. Over the last ten years, the scientific capacity within national organizations has increased significantly. However, that growth has slowed in recent years, and the overall capacity of these organizations remains extremely limited. Moreover, regional organizations do not generally have a significant scientific capacity. (This is discussed more later in this report).

Formal partnerships, such as COMPASS, which was formed in part to provide insight and guidance to the community on cutting-edge conservation science and potential solutions, have provided additional capacity. COMPASS to date has focused only on marine reserves, but is expanding its field of issues. This type of partnership has the potential to do more in the future.

The ocean conservation community has a limited number of population biologists and ecologists who participate in population assessments or can provide guidance on assessments and related technical information. The individuals themselves are extremely talented and have been productive considering the amount of work to be done. Yet, they simply cannot do it all. At the Regional Marine Conservation Advocacy Meeting in April, 2003, there was a consensus that many organizations want additional expertise. This expertise is needed to guide organizations as they prioritize their issues, including decisions on which particular species require attention, as well as to help them determine which assessments are scientifically sound and which can be trusted. This is not limited only to assessments – complex time/area closure could require similar analysis. This problem was discussed extensively at the regional meeting and several potential solutions were proposed, including creating a scientific “SWAT-team” and/or creating an independent science center.

There is often talk of bringing independent scientists into the policy and advocacy arena. Several individuals, organizations, or coalitions have done this well. For example, leading shark scientists from around the United States and the globe have been actively recruited and nurtured by a small but very active group of shark advocates. These scientists do original research and publish valuable information and also participate in stock assessments. Equally important, many of these scientists have felt compelled to get directly involved in the policy debate by participating in public hearings, serving on advisory panels, and providing NMFS with detailed comments on proposed regulations. The impact of these scientists, combined with

scientific and advocacy efforts by conservationists, has been impressive and shows that such relationships can be valuable.

Nevertheless, until the ocean conservation community can improve its performance in critically important hallmark areas like communications, lobbying, and electoral politics, the best scientific research and science-driven policy will simply not be enough. The use of science must be integrated with the other hallmarks into a strong campaign if it is to have meaning. Unless the other hallmark areas are strengthened, the scientific message cannot be effectively disseminated to the public, nor will it be heeded by policy-makers. Thus, while science can frame public policy debates, it is vital to remember that public policy decisions are political in nature, and the ocean conservation community must therefore be able to generate political support for its positions if science is to carry the day.

Litigation: Litigation is perhaps the best example of the ocean conservation community's increased effectiveness. Although CLF and Greenpeace brought fisheries-related lawsuits in the early 1990s, the community did not make consistent and coordinated use of litigation as a tool until the inception of the OLP in 1998. In the last five years, litigators for OLP, Earthjustice, NRDC, Oceana, Trustees for Alaska and CLF have brought one case after the other against NMFS under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, ESA, MMPA, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The result has been an impressive string of victories that have unquestionably changed how the agency does business.

The pinnacle of this effort was the three-year period in which the OLP was in existence. This period saw an unparalleled effort to coordinate litigation and learn from its successes and failures. The biannual OLP meetings brought the entire ocean conservation community together in a neutral forum to share information and strategize. The results speak for themselves. Victories by OLP lawyers during this period included precedent-setting cases concerning the interactions of the North Pacific groundfish trawl fisheries and the endangered Steller sea lion; the effect of the Hawaiian longline fishery on endangered monk seals; overfishing of summer flounder on the East Coast; and preparation of fishery management plans for essential fish habitat (EFH) around the country, among many others. The assembled legal talent that produced these victories was impressive by any standard, and remains one of the community's strong points.

The result of these legal victories was that NMFS realized that it could no longer ignore laws like the ESA and NEPA, and that conservationists would “hold its feet to the fire” on compliance with the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996. The agency therefore began to direct far greater resources into preparation of biological opinions, fishery management plans, and environmental impact statements. Thus, conservationists have far more information about the fisheries and their impacts than ever before, and many fisheries have been forced to operate in a more acceptable manner.

Unfortunately, when OLP was incorporated into Oceana two years ago, the biannual neutral forum meetings did not continue, which has decreased the strategic coordination between ocean conservationists and ocean-focused environmental lawyers. Nevertheless, the legal victories have continued, largely owing to the fact that NMFS and the Councils still have many lessons to learn, and that such an able pool of lawyers continue to represent the ocean conservation community.

However, the last two years have greatly emphasized a weakness of litigation that became increasingly obvious during the three years of the OLP: a winning lawsuit is only as strong as the campaign behind it. In each case, it was predictable that litigation success would result in political pushback from commercial fishing interests and their political supporters. Too often, however, the community was either not prepared for this pushback, or unable to effectively counter it. Just as victory in the Steller sea lion case produced an appropriations rider by U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK), victory in the New England groundfish case has produced a widespread backlash to the requirements of the Sustainable Fisheries Act that threatens to undo many of its most positive mandates. In the latter case in particular, the plaintiffs, while they developed a winning strategy for the lawsuit, had not adequately prepared for the consequences of victory.

The maturing ocean conservation movement needs to learn that litigation must be integrated into a comprehensive political, grassroots, and communications strategy if it is to be successful in the long run. The fact that a lawsuit is winnable is not reason enough to bring it if the other pieces of a campaign are not in place to sustain the victory. This observation is less about the community’s ability to win legal victories than its failure to operate consistently in campaign mode, a failure that will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.

Fundraising: There is no question that the ocean conservation community has greatly improved its ability to raise funds to pursue an ocean conservation agenda. No matter which metric is used – number of groups, number of staff, or actual dollar figures – ocean conservation receives far more resources than it did twenty, ten, or even five years ago. This must be considered a tremendous success, particularly in light of the effect a declining stock market has had on overall foundation resources. This success can be attributed to a number of factors, including the ocean conservation community’s success in increasing the profile of the oceans, and in shaping conservation programs that draw the attention of funders. In addition, the boards of director of several foundations deserve recognition for shown vision and leadership by supporting ocean conservation initiatives.

Nevertheless, despite the success in fundraising, there is a cost associated with it. Many of the groups, particularly the smaller ones, are concerned that they must spend an inordinate amount of time fundraising, and that these resources would be better spent on substantive program work. The absence of stable, long-term funding is a drain on many of these groups. In addition, the reporting requirements of many foundations require significant time that could be spent on program work. Moreover, because many foundations operate on short funding cycles (1-3 years), success is very difficult to evaluate, and groups have an incentive to trumpet relatively minor gains as significant achievements in grant reports.

There may also be a risk that the community is not adequately diversified in its funding base. Most of the funding for ocean conservation work comes from a handful of foundations that have done extremely well in the stock market over the past decade (despite dramatic recent declines) or received massive influxes of capital from the estate of a foundation’s creator. The reliance on a limited funding pool could have serious consequences should a foundation change priorities or experience significant stock market losses.

Underdeveloped Areas

There are at least five areas where the efforts of ocean conservationists continue to be underdeveloped – grassroots development and outreach, communications, lobbying, development of strategic partnerships, and political and attitudinal research.

Grassroots Development and Outreach: While certain ocean conservation organizations have developed and organized a grassroots constituency, this particular hallmark area has

received far too little attention from ocean conservationists, probably because it has been accurately perceived that developing such a constituency is a very difficult task. There are many reasons why this is so, but the fact remains that very few public policy initiatives can succeed over the long term unless they develop an active base of supporters. This lack of grassroots support is identified over and over in interviews with leaders in the ocean conservation community, but very few organizations seem to be devoting the resources needed to build an effective base.

Ocean conservationists have struggled to develop a message that resonates with the public or targeted audiences. Without such a message, it will always be difficult to mobilize the number of supporters necessary to apply enough pressure to decision-makers to create major changes in public policy. Lobbying by advocacy groups is only effective when it is backed by an active constituency.

On the positive side, the ocean conservation community appears to be aware of this shortcoming. In interviews with the leaders of ocean conservation programs around the country, this issue came up time and again. It was also discussed in detail at the Regional Marine Conservation Project meeting in April 2003. This honest self-assessment is the first step in addressing the problem.

As an initial step, some groups have begun tapping into their memberships by establishing e-networks, and have had some success in generating public comments on specific actions. As always, though, there is more to learn, and MoveOn.org provides an important model for using the Internet as both a grassroots and a fundraising tool. Using more traditional tactics, the National Environmental Trust and PIRG have launched a major new initiative that will place a team of organizers in key states around the country to generate grassroots support for ocean conservation. This is an important step in the right direction.

Significantly, there is a model within the ocean conservation community for how to do grassroots work – the Surfrider Foundation. Surfrider modeled its grassroots program on the chapter model of the Sierra Club. While underfunded and relatively small, Surfrider is highly effective for its size because the organization cranks out a steady stream of small, local victories every couple of months, which keep its campaigns moving. According to Chris Evans, Surfrider's Executive Director, "Without these victories, we will die on the vine." Achieving such victories is an integral part of the organization's strategy, because victories keep up the morale

of its “troops,” i.e., the members of Surfrider. In this regard, Surfrider is inspired by the work of Caesar Chavez, who recognized that all politics is local.

Evans notes that “recruitment is the key to everything we do.” Its recruitment strategy is focused around events, everything from a beach clean-up with a band, to a surfing contest, to a demonstration at an important city council meeting. In addition to such events, Surfrider has an educational program in 1,500 schools and a clean-water testing program that gets people activated in a simple, yet significant way. It also has 60 chapters doing GIS mapping in its Beach-Scape Program. All of these programs begin to build relationships with people and provides an easy way for them to get involved, so when it is time to turn out bodies, the organization can draw on its activist base.

Surfrider also communicates broadly and strategically with its membership. It has a communications plan that is plotted out over 3-5 year periods. Its staff then breaks down that plan every August to figure out what the upcoming year’s needs will be. All fundraising appeals are carefully coordinated so that they are preceded by an article on the issue in the organization’s newsletter. Similarly, mass mailings seeking either donations or specific actions are targeted regionally, so that members on the East Coast do not get an appeal about saving a beach in California. If a global appeal goes out, it mentions an issue from each region.

A key part of Surfrider’s success – and one that should not be overlooked – is that the organization has tapped into an actual user group. Surfrider’s membership is primarily composed of surfers – people who have a passionate connection to the ocean. For its members, ocean health is not a philosophical issue, but a very personal one. This strong sense of self-interest translates to powerful grassroots support.

Despite the success of Surfrider, it reaches only a small segment of the ocean-oriented public. If an ocean ethic is to be created in this country, many more citizen activists will need to be drawn into the net.

Communications: The ocean conservation community has made great strides in communication work, but on balance has yet to develop an effective message or integrate communications strategies into its programs or campaigns from the very beginning. The creation of SeaWeb eight years ago has brought an ever-increasing amount of media attention to the plight of the oceans – attention that is vital to shifting the attitudes of the public and decision-makers. Several of the national ocean groups, such as TOC, Oceana and the MFCN,

have their own media staffs, and other national groups have access to the communications departments of their organizations.

Despite this increased communications work, the poll numbers reflecting concern for the ocean have not changed significantly. While Americans have a connection to the ocean and would like to see it protected, most do not have much of an understanding of ocean issues. Moreover, while support for ocean conservation may be broad, it is not deep, and it is therefore difficult to get people to take action on ocean issues.¹⁸

There have been positive developments recently. The release of the Myers and Worm *Nature* paper on the depletion of large ocean fishes and the subsequent release of the Pew Oceans Commission report have received widespread and favorable media attention in no small part because of the excellent efforts of The Pew Commission and SeaWeb. While there is currently no polling data on the effect of this attention on public attitudes, anecdotal evidence suggests that people who would otherwise have little comprehension of ocean issues may be beginning to realize that this is an important environmental problem, and reporters are increasingly seeking out ocean issues.

However, it will be vital to build on recent efforts and continue to keep ocean news in front of the public. It is rare that two such dramatic events – the *Nature* paper and the Pew Commission report – happen in such close proximity and with such fanfare. In order to really elevate these issues in the public’s mind requires a relatively steady “drumbeat” of media coverage, and the main limitation to achieving a consistent, high-profile drumbeat is money. If SeaWeb and the communication professionals from the other ocean conservation organizations had a tenth of the advertising budget of Coke or Pepsi, they could more easily capture the public’s imagination and help the community achieve its public policy goals. Of course, ocean conservationists will never have that kind of money, and thus it will be necessary to work together in a coordinated way to capitalize on every earned media opportunity that presents itself.

Despite the presence of competent communications professionals in the community, a winning ocean conservation message has proven hard to come by, and has proven difficult to communicate to Americans. Unlike other environmental issues, such as protecting forests or clean water, protecting the oceans does not elicit a backyard connection with the public nor do they feel something they value at risk, such as their health. Most people understand that polluted drinking water negatively affects them, which makes activating people on this issue

inherently easier. Polluted ocean water does not weigh heavily on the American mind, except as it relates to beach closings. Similarly, the vast majority of people will never be able to see how bottom-trawling clear-cuts the ocean floor. Ocean issues are largely out-of-sight, out-of-mind for the majority of Americans.

Mistakenly, the message is often being developed as an afterthought, rather than as a critical antecedent to any conservation campaign, or the message is developed without adequate information on target audiences. Too often, ocean conservationists have not worked with communication professionals to craft a message and settle on the messenger before they take action. A prime example of this tendency occurred at the April Regional Marine Conservation Project meeting, where a roomful of lawyers, scientists, and policy analysts sat around talking about how to “message” overfishing. A survey of the room revealed only one communications specialist from any organization, poignantly illustrating the community’s failure to adequately appreciate the importance of communications to overall strategy.

Whatever the cause, the creation of a general willingness to act on behalf of the oceans, not to mention the benefits of an ocean ethic, remains out of reach. As a result of this lack of connection and understanding, Americans have not actively engaged in the politics of the oceans.¹⁹ The FrameWorks Institute report confirmed this fact and also reveals that ocean activists have often focused on the wrong issues in attempting to bridge this communication gap. For instance, focusing on the “mystery” of the oceans only makes them seem more remote, and actually makes the listener feel more disconnected from the oceans, rather than inspired to come to their rescue.²⁰

Critical to improving communications is choosing message, messenger and target audience. The Frameworks Institute report prepared in advance of the Pew Ocean Commission release revealed that many of the assumptions ocean conservationists have been making about how to message oceans have been incorrect, and that what works for terrestrial issues often does not work for the oceans. Importantly, the Frameworks Institute’s and SeaWeb’s findings have provided ocean conservationists with a new understanding of what can work, and a well-developed set of tools to craft an effective media message. In order to succeed, the ocean conservation community must appreciate the importance of communication. For effective communications, the community must do the public opinion research necessary to identify message and target audience, develop a communications strategy, and most importantly, integrate that strategy seamlessly into its overarching campaigns and agenda from the outset.

Lobbying: Another area that has received far too little attention is old-fashioned lobbying (for purposes of this report, much of what is termed “lobbying” is actually public education of elected officials, which can be funded by charitable foundations, but also includes lobbying as defined by the Internal Revenue Service). Ocean conservationists may have great ideas about reforming ocean policy, but those ideas will never get anywhere unless they are communicated effectively to policy makers, usually legislators. The strength of lobbying efforts depends almost entirely on the personal relationships the lobbyists build with the members of Congress and their staffs. These relationships are built over time, and involve as much listening and responding to the needs of the legislator as it does simply advocating a particular position. These efforts are most effective when reinforced with sound policy, political clout and grassroots support. As our survey of successful organizations demonstrates, effective organizations establish long-term relationships with legislators and their staffs, and use those relationships to advance their public policy agendas.

However, there are only a handful of fulltime lobbyists in the ocean conservation realm, and they are stretched far too thin to be really effective, regardless of their individual skills. The reasons for this deficiency are not readily apparent. While 501(c)(3) organizations obviously have a lobbying threshold that they must respect under IRS rules, none of the groups appear to be anywhere close to that threshold. This would tend to suggest that these groups have not made lobbying efforts a priority. It is also consistent with the general tendency of ocean conservation organizations to emphasize policy over politics. Being right on the merits of the policy is important, but is not sufficient to result in getting that policy made into law. Without access to the policy makers, there is little hope of achieving public policy success.

In addition to the failure to establish and cultivate long-term relationships with key legislators and their staffs, several current and former Hill staffers have indicated that some ocean conservationists have made serious and fundamental errors in their lobbying efforts. Indeed, these staffers have questioned whether the oceans community as a whole understands how the Hill works and what the political factors are that go into any specific decision. They assert that many representatives of ocean conservation organizations have displayed little recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of the ocean conservation position, much less the political limitations and trigger points of the elected officials they are attempting to educate.

A more fundamental criticism leveled by these current and former staffers is that the oceans community has a very hard time saying what it is for, and instead seems to always be against something. One said that ocean conservationists “seem to be organized only to advocate and attack.” These staffers point out that effective groups bring good ideas to the Hill and say, “Help us do this.” They note that when fishermen come to the Hill, they usually have their work done – they have worked out a deal and written language, which makes it easy to work with them. They also look for cooperative projects that build good will, because they give the senator or representative something to show his or her constituents. This good will pays off later when industry lobbyists need a more difficult action. Significantly, a dedicated handful of ocean advocates did exactly this from 1994 to 1996, when the community achieved passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. Unfortunately, the community has rarely worked in this way since.

As these staffers point out, industry excels in how it delivers its message. Whenever possible, industry will use someone who has a personal relationship with the senator or representative, sometimes an ex-staffer. If the lobbyist does not have a personal relationship with the senator or representative, he or she brings along someone who does, or brings someone from the senator or representative’s home state. When generating calls to a senator’s or representative’s office, industry is able to draw on knowledgeable people with a real connection to the issue at hand, rather than a philosophical interest. One staffer says that a single call from such a person is worth ten calls from an uninformed environmentalist who is just reading the script from an action alert. This last point further emphasizes the importance of cultivating grassroots supporters from active user groups.

Strategic Alliances: Successful organizations recognize their weaknesses and are willing to join forces with other organizations that have strengths that address those shortcomings. The ocean conservation community has made some nods in this direction and has done it fairly well on occasion, but generally has been unwilling to make the compromises necessary to bring more organizations into the “base” of the community, and to form strong alliances with potential partners on specific issues. Given the small size of the community, and the power of the industrial interests it opposes, forging such partnerships and alliances is critical to success.

MFCN is a good example of trying to bring together a number of different interests – environmentalists, recreational fishermen, and commercial fishermen – to work for a mutually

beneficial goal: improvements in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In 1996, an MFCN-led coalition was successful in doing just that, when it secured passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act. While the end product was success, certain members of the group apparently negotiated behind the scenes for less than what the group had agreed upon, which of course led to recriminations and mistrust. The reconstituted MFCN has also experienced some of these problems, particularly with regard to the issue of Individual Fishing Quotas (IFQ). Moreover, tensions over non-strategic litigation and ocean wilderness/marine protected areas are ever-present. This pattern does not increase the strength of the community in its dealing with Congress, the Administration, or the opposition.

Similar problems have plagued other coalitions like the Alaska Oceans Network and the Ocean Wilderness Network. These groups have struggled to find strength in diversity. The frequent pattern is that, rather than working together to develop and implement a strategic campaign while letting each group exploit its particular place on the ideological spectrum, there is an insistence that all members must adopt identical positions, which leads to “lowest common denominator” dysfunction. Or groups enter into a coalition knowing that adherence to a particular idea is a precondition, and then refuse to give up sufficient organizational autonomy to achieve that position. Or, having agreed upon a position, certain group members actually undercut other members who push that position.

These problems seem to happen most frequently in one of two situations: either a funder decides that a coalition would be a good thing and offers money if one is started, or several groups decide that they might be able to entice funders if they form a “campaign” or “network.” These are not coalitions that happen organically because of a recognized mutual need or interest in working together and they frequently fail to have an adequate campaign plan and agreement on overall strategy before taking off. The result is too often failure.

On the other hand, there are examples of groups working well together toward a common goal – the joint work of the Ocean Wildlife Campaign and the Give Swordfish A Break Campaign (SeaWeb and NRDC) on establishing an international recovery plan for Atlantic swordfish populations, and achieving large-scale domestic time and area closures to reduce the bycatch of undersized Atlantic swordfish, for instance, was quite effective and successful.

Only two ocean conservation organizations we interviewed highlighted internal “contentment” or “harmony” as a factor in effectiveness and the need for organizations within a community to work well together. While we did not evaluate a harmony factor in successful

organizations, it is only common sense that a certain level of disharmony will inhibit productivity. We have observed a growing disharmony and a sense of competition within the ocean community. Whether organizations are internally harmonious or not, current partnerships are not adequate and, on the whole, the ocean conservation community has to do a much better job of working together.

Strategic alliances go far beyond just working within a community of interest. As presently constituted, the ocean conservation community is simply not large enough to get the needed result in Congress. Ocean conservationists so far have not done an effective job of reaching out to other environmentalists or other groups with which they might find common ground. A key part of achieving such alliances will be to build grassroots support and political power, so that the ocean conservation community has something to offer potential partners. Without such alliances, there will be limits to what the ocean community can accomplish.

Political and Attitudinal Research: A final under-served area involves political and attitudinal research. Within the broad hallmark area of research, there are several sub-categories. As already noted, the ocean conservation community uses scientific research well – the type of research that identifies problems, solutions, and goes into the formulation of science-driven policy. The community does much less well in an area that is arguably even more important to the development of campaigns: political and attitudinal research.

In order to understand how to move public opinion, it is necessary to first understand where the public is, and to identify target audiences and the message that will move it. Most of the research and polling that the ocean conservation community currently conducts is at a very surface level. While there is plenty of data to suggest that Americans love the ocean and that they want to see it protected, there is very little data on what would motivate them to take action for the ocean, or why protection of the oceans is not a more salient issue politically. Without this data, it will be very difficult to move public opinion in any significant way.

Public opinion research and message development have never been more important in the world of ocean conservation because there are signs that they can be done more effectively and sensitively. Recent FrameWorks Institute findings indicates that it may be a falsehood to assume that what works to rally public support around land-based conservation efforts will work for ocean issues. People, it seems, have different reasons for saving a forest

than a fishery. The research shows their relationship to terrestrial wildlife is emotionally closer than their feelings for marine life – and that distinction needs to be understood and addressed before people can be expected to respond to a call to action on behalf of a bluefin tuna, a mako shark or other ocean wildlife. Understanding what persuades and motivates people to participate in a policy or political discussion is complex, vital to effective conservation communications, and ignored at a great cost.

Non-Existent Areas – Electoral Politics

All of the successful organizations we studied recognized the importance that electoral politics plays in advancing a public policy agenda, and therefore either have their own PAC and/or 527, have strong alliances with such an organization, or believe they would be more effective if they had their own. While the ocean conservation community has made some efforts in all of the hallmark areas discussed above, there is one area where the community has virtually no presence – electoral politics.

Participating in electoral politics is critically important to cultivating the political champions who are necessary for any movement to succeed in advancing its agenda. However, ocean conservationists have tended to focus on policy, rather than politics. As a result, the ocean conservation movement does not have any true champions at the federal or state levels. While ocean conservationists do have supporters, none of these supporters are willing to make ocean conservation one of their top-three legislative priorities, or to “fall on their swords” to protect the ocean.

Nowhere is this more true than in the U.S. Senate. Last year’s court ruling requiring a reduction in catch in the New England groundfish fisheries because of persistent overfishing violations resulted in a bill that would weaken NMFS’ overfishing regulations. The bill passed the Senate by unanimous consent and narrowly avoided being passed by the House. This change was proposed, not by anti-environmental zealots, but by senators who are widely perceived as strong on the vast majority of other environmental issues.

The reality is that almost any member of the House or Senate from a coastal state, no matter how strong his or her overall environmental record, has been unwilling to oppose fishing interests in their state. Because ocean conservationists do not participate in electoral politics, these politicians have nothing to gain and very little to lose from voting against ocean conservation, or for only being tepid supporters. They do not perceive that they will be giving

up either votes or campaign contributions – two of the things that are most important to politicians. Nor do they perceive that they will receive good publicity – another important type of political currency – for standing up for the oceans. In fact, they perceive just the opposite – that they will receive bad publicity for being against the fisherman. If politics is about “carrot and stick” – the ability to reward good behavior or punish bad – ocean conservationists have neither.

While some might argue that the oceans have a voice through LCV, which bills itself as the political arm of the environmental movement, it is important to understand that LCV spends virtually all of its considerable resources and influence on issues that emphasize the differences between the two parties, the so-called “wedge” issues, and on issues that voters find most compelling when making their voting decisions. Almost all of the time, these end up being more traditional environmental issues (such as public lands and pollution), rather than ocean issues. Although LCV does include one member of the ocean community – Lee Crockett of MFCN – on its board of advisors, it has not focused on ocean conservation and protection and cannot be depended upon to provide assistance in building political influence for ocean conservation on a consistent basis.

That is so because ocean issues, unlike traditional environmental issues are typically *not* partisan in nature and therefore *not* good wedge issues. It is not that LCV ignores ocean conservation, but rather that ocean conservation battles do not lend themselves to the LCV *Scorecard* and “dirty dozen” strategy. Indeed, some of the legislators with the best LCV voting records have terrible records when it comes to ocean and, in particular, fisheries conservation issues. These are typically Democratic legislators with a strong commercial fishing industry presence in their districts. Moreover, it is rare that ocean issues actually come to the floor of either chamber, which makes it difficult for LCV to score such issues on its report card. In addition, while at least two organizations that do ocean work – NRDC and ED – have recently announced plans to add political organizations to their current structure, neither of these organizations will be focused on ocean issues, and both are likely to work similarly to LCV.

Without a greater presence in electoral politics, ocean conservationists are missing one of the most important tools to create political influence. Importantly, it is up to ocean conservationists to correct this weakness and begin the process of building political champions.

The Big Picture – Campaign Focus Is Lacking

The hallmarks of success are about running an effective long-term campaign. Successful organizations figure out what they want to do, prepare a plan to achieve those goals, and then execute the plan using the tools that will result in victory. They fight mission creep and make sure that their activities contribute to the larger goals. They resist the urge to be carried away by too many conflicting or ancillary demands. They have a vision for what *should* be in the long term, and all of their activities add up to achieving that vision.

Unfortunately, the ocean conservation community has not done a very impressive job to date of staying focused on the big picture and operating in campaign mode. Instead, there has been a tendency to spend far too much time putting out fires, focusing on the minutiae of policy work, and taking on too many small projects that are not part of a larger campaign plan. This pattern leads to a dilution of effort, which in turn leads to a failure to achieve major victories.

This tendency can be traced to the dominance of technical specialists within the ocean conservation community. Whether they are scientists, lawyers, or policy analysts, specialists tend to focus exhaustively on specific areas and tasks. These specialists play important roles in campaigns, but they should not be designing and running the campaign on their own. The ocean conservation community suffers from too many specialists and not enough campaign planners and strategic/political thinkers.

On the positive side, when the community figures out what it wants to pursue, it works extremely hard to achieve it. There also seems to be an increasing awareness that the community needs to focus on big issues, and marshal its resources in pursuit of those goals. A good example is the recent focus on eliminating bottom trawling. The challenge will be to stay focused on big issues and ensure that the majority of community resources are poured into them, rather than into fighting a series of minor defensive battles.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The challenges and opportunities facing the ocean conservation community have never been greater. Leaders of the major ocean conservation organizations and programs around the country acknowledge that meeting these challenges and seizing these opportunities will be exceedingly difficult without significant changes in the current political, public opinion, and organizational climates. If the status quo continues, ocean advocates will achieve only limited success, and may experience serious setbacks.

Our report has identified the hallmarks of success, described how those hallmarks are manifested through case studies of a number of successful organizations, and evaluated the ocean conservation community with respect to those hallmarks. Our analysis revealed that there are three overarching priority areas that deserve special attention by the ocean conservation community. These three priorities are:

- (1) participating fully in the political process;
- (2) conducting coordinated campaigns; and
- (3) improving organizational relationships.

Again, it is critical that the ocean conservation community understand the importance of these overarching priorities before considering specific recommendations.

Priority One: Conservation is Politics. First and foremost, the ocean conservation community must begin participating fully in the political process if it is to be successful. Full participation involves both professional and grassroots lobbying, which gives an organization a voice, and, more importantly, direct involvement in the electoral process, which makes elected officials willing to listen. Participating in electoral politics is critically important to cultivating the champions who are necessary for any movement to succeed in advancing its agenda and will require creating political organizations that can work to elect those champions.

Priority Two: Coordinated Campaigns Lead to Victory. Again we stress that strengthening the critical strategy areas of communications, grassroots, lobbying, and electoral politics, as important as they are, is not enough unless they are all used together in a coordinated, strategic way. The ocean conservation community must learn to operate from a

strictly disciplined campaign mode. Critical to this effort is to begin to pay as much attention to communications as to policy, and to integrate communications into all advocacy from the start. In addition, until the ocean conservation community develops a reliable base, and learns to mobilize it through the use of strategic campaigns, its ability to produce the “fundamental change in the nation’s posture toward its oceans” called for by the Pew Oceans Commission will be limited.

Priority Three: Strong Organizational Relationships Create a Climate for Success. Finally, ocean conservation organizations must improve relationships both within and among groups and cultivate new alliances outside the community. Ocean activists must put aside their differences and unite behind the big issues that link the community, or face the reality that they will never have the strength to fight the battles that matter most, i.e., those against the foes of conservation. In addition, because of the small size of the ocean conservation community, and the power of the industrial interests it opposes, forging partnerships and alliances outside the current community is critical to success. To do otherwise is to risk irrelevance.

Having the framework of the three priority needs, we now offer our recommendations on changes the ocean conservation community needs to make if it is to achieve the level of success enjoyed by our hallmark organizations and the issues they represent.

Coordinated Campaigns & Strategic Alliances

Successful public policy organizations tend to operate from campaign mode. They establish clearly identified goals, as well as the tactics to accomplish the goals, and build in milestones to evaluate progress and make mid-stream adjustments as necessary. This is a proactive process that helps organizations define “victory,” including what is negotiable and how to achieve it. The hallmarks of success that comprise the legs of the stool (communications, grassroots, lobbying, and electoral politics, including strategic alliances as needed) are integrated into the strategy from the beginning. While a campaign can be defensive by design, it is not reactive.

Strategic Campaigns: The ocean conservation community is too often reactive. This approach has grown from a culture where organizations or funders identify a problem, have a sincere desire to correct the problem, and forge ahead. While the conservation goals may be

readily identifiable, there is often *not* a clear assessment of the likelihood of success. In addition, the strategy, tactics, and coordination necessary for victory are less clearly defined and sometimes missing. Finally, the focus and discipline required to achieve victory are easy to lose when not embedded in a tightly constructed plan for action. While strengthening critical strategy areas – communications, grassroots, lobbying, and electoral politics – is essential, we would argue, it is not enough unless they are used all together.

We recommend organizations place a greater focus on developing and running strategic campaigns. The keys to a successful campaign are adequate fundraising; developing and implementing a fully integrated strategy that incorporates as many of the hallmarks as necessary to succeed; keeping an eye on the big picture and strategy; planning for the many different routes the path can take, and finally, exercising focus and discipline.

Strategic Alliances: Ocean activists are not working together effectively to overcome the challenges they face. Rather than recognizing that having a variety of groups across the ideological spectrum can be a strength, there has been a tendency to attempt to force everyone to adopt similar, often identical, positions. Coalitions have typically been formed from the top down, in response to a particular issue of need rather than allowed to happen “organically” where strategic considerations play a dominant role as to which organizations participate and how. As a result, much energy has been directed toward securing support for pet projects or infighting, rather than directed toward designing and running effective campaigns. Successful coalitions have many requirements but none greater than the need for all members to compromise. Many organizations have been unwilling to give up some level of control to achieve larger goals. This is likely because organizations do not see the benefit in such a strategic alliance. However, few if any ocean conservation organizations possess the ability to carry out a major policy change initiative on their own. Like it or not, organizations need each other.

We recommend that organizations in the ocean community conduct a searching inventory of their strengths and weaknesses and become willing to make the necessary adjustments and compromises to form more successful strategic alliances within the community.

New Partners: This recommendation applies not only with respect to working with traditional conservation organizations already within the communities, but applies to new partners as well. Organizations must identify and successfully bring like-minded organizations into the fold. This reality will have its costs. First and foremost, it may mean giving up on some issues of importance in order to enlarge the base. No organization or movement can win without a strong base. Right now, the ocean conservation community is lacking a significant base. If conservation is politics and politics is the art of the deal, then the community needs to figure out what deals it can make to enlarge its base.

Recreational anglers are an excellent example of a potential strategic alliance. These fishermen make up an ocean user group with real and growing political power. When it comes to conservation, there is every reason to believe that ocean conservationists and saltwater anglers can agree on 7 or 8 out of 10 issues (possibly even more). Would the ocean conservation community be willing to give up the 2 issues in order to get 80% of its reform agenda passed? Many strategic alliances require making tough choices. This would be no exception. The community must ask itself if it can succeed with most of its agenda without support of recreational anglers? It is time for the community to make some important and difficult decisions. Some organizations have already made similarly tough decisions regarding their positions and alliances, and we believe more are on the horizon.

Just as members of the ocean conservation community must evaluate their strengths and weaknesses with respect to *other members of the community*, they must also become willing to form more successful strategic alliances with *new partners* outside the current community as a way to enlarge the ocean conservation “base.”

Focusing Limited Resources: While working in campaign mode and participating in strategic alliances will increase the likelihood of success, the community must make sure its

limited resources are being focused on the right goals. Massive resources have been devoted to implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Act through the Regional Fishery Management Council process, which is inherently stacked against conservation. Ocean conservationists have been willing to count very small actions taken by the Councils as victories. Many advocates question the likelihood of ever halting overfishing, dramatically reducing bycatch or protecting habitat under the current seriously flawed structure. There is no question that some of the energy spent in securing limited victories, which require constant vigilance to protect and retain, would be better spent searching for new tools and opportunities to accomplish the same goals, such as the establishment of marine reserves, continuing to expand consumer seafood initiatives, or creation of an ocean ethic.

It is important to “see the whole field” and focus energy, talent, and money on the true barriers to success. For example, without a fundamental change in how the oceans are viewed, and ultimately managed and protected, is it possible to save biodiversity one species at a time? One management plan at a time?

Considering the limited resources available, organizations must redouble their efforts to ensure they spend those resources efficiently, either by working to accomplish fundamental reform of a flawed system that will lead to real and lasting protection for the oceans and their wildlife.

Recruit Specialists: One final organizational issue involves specialization. The ocean community has a pool of talented, experienced, and dedicated advocates, primarily made up of lawyers, scientists, and policy analysts. While able to perform many tasks, few specialists have the skill to carry out the entire suite of tasks needed to achieve victory. Yet, an examination of organizations finds such a demand is placed on many individuals. The ocean community has functional specialists outside their area of expertise determining which tactic will be most effective in a particular situation. Too often an organizational or coalition “strategy” meeting to plan tactics and activities is held *without* a single communication, grassroots, or political specialist in the room. No organization would plan a lawsuit without a litigator in the room nor would it plan for a fish population assessment without a biologist (hopefully a population biologist or modeler) providing guidance. Successful organizations make sure they have the right person for the right job.

We recommend that ocean conservation organizations recruit the appropriate specialists, in particular, the underutilized communications, grassroots, and political specialists.

Message, Message, and More Message

The ability to communicate an ocean conservation message to the public, or an identified target audience, is a barrier to success for the ocean conservation community, yet fundamental to long-term success. Communication is one leg of a four-legged stool that includes grassroots organizing, lobbying, and electoral politics to shape public policy.

As Peter Schurman of MoveOn.org observed, environmentalists tend to be overly “wonkish” and do not communicate in a way that is understandable by the public. It is critical to involve media professionals who understand communication from the very beginning. To not do so is more than simply an inefficient allocation of resources – it is counterproductive and can hurt proper messaging. The ocean conservation community has a good pool of media professionals on board, but there is room for additional seasoned professionals to help develop communications strategy.

We recommend that communications experts be included in any and all campaign strategy discussions from the beginning. We also recommend that more seasoned professionals be hired to complement the current talent pool.

Positive Message: Another important part of message is working to figure out what the ocean conservation community is “for.” As discussed in the evaluation of the ocean community and lobbying, staffers on Capitol Hill know very well what ocean conservationists are *against*, but have little idea what they support. A negative message simply cannot succeed in the long run. There are plenty of times when it will be necessary to be against a particular proposal or piece of legislation, but without a positive agenda that balances out the negative, ocean conservationists will simply be dismissed as chronic malcontents.

We recommend that the ocean conservation community spend significant energy on working to come up with a positive vision that can be communicated to the public and decision-makers.

Create Compelling Messages: Marine biologists and policy analysts are so immersed in ocean issues that many are incapable of grasping how far from the public they are, and thus need communications specialists to make that leap. Even then, the key to successful communication is prolonged repetition of a clear compelling message. Fortunately, recent research by SeaWeb and the Frameworks Institute provides advice on how to create messages about ocean conservation.

We recommend that ocean conservation organizations craft more compelling messages about ocean conservation by using the results of the research by SeaWeb and the Frameworks Institutes.

Start Where They Are: The oceans community needs to start where the public, or target audience is, talk in terms that connect to the public and be compelling. It will be necessary to conduct public opinion research to inform communications and outreach. To create a base, win supporters and create grassroots action, ocean conservationists must start where the public is – what do they believe, what do they value, what motivates them to feel personally connected and to take action on behalf of the oceans? Until these questions are answered, campaigns are flying blind.

The quantity and depth of public opinion research to inform communications and outreach must be increased significantly, so that ocean conservationists can “start where they are” when communicating with the public.

Time to Build a Constituency for the Oceans

Ocean conservation organizations have not built a sufficient constituency to support ocean conservation. Simply put, the community does not currently have a large or vocal base of

supporters that will allow it to be more effective. This failure has been noted for a number of years and is hardly news.²¹ Nevertheless, it remains a significant restraint on the ability of the community to achieve its goals. Fortunately, this limitation is recognized by virtually all in the community and, as previously discussed, efforts are being made to improve the situation.

We commend these actions and recommend an even greater commitment from the community that involves an enhanced level of sophistication. It is our belief that success in dramatically improving ocean public policy will only be achieved after a base of supporters is identified, built up, and activated.

Building Constituency: Building a base is challenging, yet all of the organizations we studied had a strong base of support. To date, though, the base of the ocean conservation movement has neither been identified nor mobilized. The easiest target for inclusion in a base would seem to be dues-paying members of environmental organizations, particularly those with ocean conservation programs. However, such individuals may not prove to be the most fruitful constituency. According to Matt Ridley and Bobbi Low in their article “Can Selfishness Save the Environment?,” “The environmental movement has set itself an unnecessary obstacle by largely ignoring the fact that human beings are motivated by self interest rather than collective interests.”²²

Thus, ocean *users* may be the best target. Many of the goals of the ocean conservation community will coincide with the self-interests of surfers, divers, boaters, recreational fishermen, tourism-based industries, and tourists themselves. This self-interest can be tapped for the benefit of conservation.

Of course, building a base does not have to be mutually exclusive. Some data support the contention that the broader environmental constituency can be motivated to care about ocean conservation. The important point is that current constituent support is insufficient to prevent losing important gains that have been made or to support advancing bold new initiatives.

Moreover, there is a growing body of information regarding attitudes toward the oceans, barriers to action, and practical solutions for how to be more successful in messaging the oceans. There is also a large body of similar information for the environmental community as a whole including Dr. Deborah Lynn Guber’s book, *The Grassroots of a Green Revolution:*

*Polling America on the Environment.*²³ This type of information will prove invaluable when it comes to identifying and mobilizing the base of the ocean conservation movement.

We recommend that the ocean conservation community make a concerted effort at identifying individuals with a direct connection to the ocean, rather than those who are merely “supporters” of conservation, but have no personal stake in it. We recommend that this group then be cultivated as a base. In identifying these individuals, we recommend that the definition of “self-interested user” be relatively broad, so as to bring in as many interested parties as possible.

List Enhancement: List enhancement is a fundamental component to helping organizations be more efficient and strategic. Research demonstrates that the most frequent voters tend to be the best activists. List enhancement therefore pools together the membership lists of coalitions of environmental organizations. The lists are then merged, duplicate names removed, and each entry is enhanced with voter frequency data, county, voting precinct, state and federal legislative districts, age and gender, and other publicly available demographic and geographic information. It can also update phone numbers and addresses.

By using list enhancement, groups can stretch their program dollars by identifying members who are likely activists, targeting voter participation efforts, and improving fundraising. Individual groups and coalitions also use list enhancement to identify and select citizens to receive mailings, phone calls, and educational materials. Some groups, such as the Ocean Conservancy, are already using list enhancement. This tool can help each group accomplish its own goals, can ease the way for coalition efforts and can begin to build strategic alliances with terrestrial focused organizations, finding more communication results in common goals.

We recommend that all ocean conservation groups join with the rest of the environmental community to take advantage of the list enhancement tool.

The Internet: The use of the Internet in grassroots mobilizing deserves some attention because it is currently being successfully exploited by organizations such as MoveOn.org and

Gov. Howard Dean’s presidential campaign. Internet organizing is a powerful tactic that should be evaluated and woven into every grassroots strategy as appropriate. However, there is no compelling evidence that this tactic is going to be effective for mobilizing oceans activists on the scale of MoveOn.Org or Governor Dean’s campaign. MoveOn, for instance, is tapping into discontent on a grand scale. Peter Schurman described MoveOn’s efforts as a “focus on large areas of disconnect between public opinion and public policy.” Its selection of the Clinton impeachment and the war in Iraq have successfully tapped this disconnect. While it is unlikely that the ocean conservation community can replicate this spectacular level of success because there is no such “disconnect” to exploit, the Internet still deserves attention.

We recommend that, in addition to traditional organizing methods, ocean conservationists figure out how to use the Internet as part of a plan for establishing and building a relationship with a base. In using the Internet, it is critical to remember that the purpose is to build a relationship with the target audience. Moreover, it is important for activists to stay nimble, keep up with technology, and be prepared to exploit opportunities as they arise.

Enhancing Effectiveness of Lobbying

Successful organizations use their lobbyists as a tool to create political leverage with elected officials and key decision-makers. Professional lobbying is about relationships – the type of relationships lacking for the most part with the ocean conservation community. The first step in enhancing lobbying effectiveness is simply to do it more often. The community does not do enough lobbying for reasons that are difficult to understand. It is unclear if the 20% threshold that binds 501(c)(3) organizations drives the agenda. Considering that few if any organizations are near this limit, that is unlikely.

We recommend the quantity of personal contact lobbying be increased as quickly as feasible. This will likely mean hiring more dedicated lobbyists, as well as making more efforts to bring people from the regions to lobby on a more consistent basis, rather than just during periods of crisis.

Understand the Rules of Lobbying: The second step is to lobby more effectively. In order to do this, lobbyists, in particular junior lobbyists, must better understand the rules on Capitol Hill. Personal contact lobbying is critical to advancing a public policy agenda. The lack of close personal relationships with key members of Congress and their staffs is a mistake that must be corrected. Lobbyists must have proper entrée to key offices and must come prepared. Before someone walks into a congressional member's office to lobby them on any issue, he or she should understand who they are lobbying and why. It is important to know the demographics of the district, know how many members of their organization live in the district, know how many fishermen or other important ocean users live and or work in the district, and understand what supporting your position will "cost" the member. Moreover, remember that, because lobbying is about relationships, it is critical to be personable. We have heard far too many stories of staffers being offended by the demeanor of ocean conservationists during meetings. Successful lobbyists form friendships with staffers and look at them as partners, not adversaries.

We recommend that greater emphasis be placed on understanding the behavior required for effective lobbying. Remembering to start where the staffs and legislators are will result in a higher quality of lobbying.

Hire Professional Lobbyists: Third, consider hiring seasoned professional lobbyists for select niche opportunities, specifically, to work the Appropriations Committees. The Appropriation Committees are important and have not received enough attention from the ocean conservation community. Using seasoned veterans who know their way around this insider's arena could pay dividends.

We recommend that groups consider hiring Washington insider lobbyists on specific issues that require top talent, such as working the Appropriations Committees.

Enlist Grassroots Ocean Constituents: Another important lobbying issue is grassroots lobbying. Ocean conservationists need to do a far better job of finding real ocean users with a stake in ocean conservation to make trips to Washington to lobby, and then be willing to call

their representatives and senators on specific issues. As one former staffer told us for this report, “A phone call from a single individual who knows what they are talking about is worth far more than a hundred emails generated from an action alert.” Along these lines, groups need to cultivate “grasstops” individuals who may be able to get in contact with the senator or representative in person.

We recommend that ocean conservationists spend more energy on finding real constituents, especially those that have a personal connection, to lobby their senators and representatives.

Create Congressional Fellowships: Industry has learned that one of the most effective ways to build relationships on the Hill is to fund fellowships to put an intern in a congressional office for a year. The purpose of such a fellowship is not to have the intern advance an agenda, but merely to help the congressional office and build relationships that will endure. Industry has also done an excellent job of hiring former Congressional staffers who have close relationships with key members of Congress. Ocean conservationists could create similar fellowships for recent graduates from college, graduate school, and/or GreenCorps. Following the fellowship, these interns would then go to work for an ocean conservation organization as a fulltime lobbyist.

We recommend that the ocean conservation community explore options for creating a congressional fellowship program.

Create Ocean Think Tank: We have heard repeatedly from Capitol Hill that the ocean conservation community fails to bring forward ideas to solve the problems it identifies. A Washington, D.C.-based “think tank” that could articulate a long-term vision for ocean conservation, produce strategic publications and writings to advance this agenda, and provide quick-response expertise to the U.S. Congress, Administration, and others who would need to craft legislation to advance the agenda could fill this niche. This think tank would be made up of individuals with expertise in politics, policy, law, economics, and science.

We recommend that the feasibility of such a think tank, including the mission, goals, and structure, be evaluated.

Electoral Politics Is the Keystone

Ocean conservation is not a factor in our nation's political process. The vast majority of U.S. senators and representatives have not gotten the message that the oceans are in trouble and need attention. Some of this is a failure of lobbying and some of it is a failure to mobilize constituents to communicate with their elected representatives that the oceans matter to them. There is not a single member of either the House or Senate who counts ocean conservation among his or her top three priorities and is willing to fall on his or her sword to protect the oceans against the interests of another powerful senator or representative. In other words, there simply are no true champions for the oceans in Congress. While there are a number of strong supporters of ocean conservation, such as Senator Barbara Boxer or Representative Sam Farr, none of these supporters have taken on ocean issues in such a way as to elevate them on the national stage. A true champion would do that.

The most likely profile for a champion for the oceans would seem to be liberals in states that border the ocean. But many of these have commercial fishermen in their district, and these would-be champions see the need to serve the interests of their commercial fishermen constituents. There is no equally strong constituent voice advocating for ocean protections.

Create Ocean PACS and 527s: If there is a single take home message from our study, it is that in order to be successful in public policy debates it is necessary to participate fully in the political process. One fundamental aspect of this participation is involvement in the electoral process, which is done through political committees, or organizations. Ocean activists have never gotten involved in electoral politics and therefore have no way to either reward those who have been supporters of ocean conservation or to punish those who have been opponents. We believe strongly that the movement needs champions in order to be successful.

Policy makers listen to lobbyists most when they believe that the lobbyists represent a powerful constituency. Participating in electoral politics sends this message. In order to adequately open the door to the lobbyists by creating champions for the oceans, the ocean

community needs a PAC. To adequately elevate ocean issues so that they become an election issue in certain districts, the ocean community needs to establish a 527 committee.

The major national environmental organizations doing electoral politics – LCV and Sierra Club – have both recognized that the 2004 election is a test of the strength of environmental issues in national politics. According to a recent article in *National Journal*, LCV and Sierra Club “are set on making 2004 the most important election in the movement’s history.”²⁴ It is therefore imperative that ocean conservationists be part of this effort, in order to increase their profile in national politics. To stand on the sidelines at this moment is to ensure irrelevance.

And it is not enough to simply rely on LCV and Sierra Club to pull ocean conservationists along in their wake. Neither LCV nor Sierra Club have focused on ocean issues in the past and cannot be counted on to do so in the future, largely because ocean issues are not good wedge issues. Ocean conservationists must look to the example of AFGE, which is a part of a larger labor movement, the AFL-CIO, yet nevertheless needs to have its own political organization because of certain factors that make its issues different from the larger movement. AFGE needs its political organization in order to cultivate the champions that are so critical to its success.

We make no judgments or recommendations regarding the structure of individual organizations; however, we do not believe the ocean conservation community as currently structured has, or is likely to produce, the necessary champions or political clout to reform current ocean management and conservation.

We recommend that independent political committees, which focus solely on ocean conservation, be created. We envision both a Political Action Committee, which can endorse and oppose candidates, as well as a 527 organization, which can participate in issue advocacy and get-out-the-vote activities.

Scientific Information Is Important, But It Is Not Enough

There is growing recognition within the conservation community that being “right” on the science is not enough to win. There is, however, less of an understanding that competing advocacy stances on the science typically results in status quo. When confronted with competing science, non-scientists, including the public and decision-makers, are typically unwilling to make a change. This fact is not lost on anti-environment interests who most often benefit from status quo. A compelling example is the debate over the role of humans in global climate change. A scientific consensus has not been enough to overcome the power of a vocal, organized, and politically connected minority opinion. Whether manufactured or misrepresented, the uncertainty serves its purpose to prevent policy change. This is well understood by fishing interests, in particular commercial fishing interests, and is one of the explanations why they have spent considerable time and energy to reframe the “best available science” debate. They believe that if the debate focuses on the uncertainty, they will win. Competing science, especially when presented by parties with political clout, can effectively block action, whereas it cannot drive change. And considering that the public and elected officials are not interested in a science lesson, the solution is not simply more science. This tactic must be understood by ocean advocates and planned for in advance.

Enhance Science Capacity as part of the Campaign: Given this reality, it is important to determine whether more scientific expertise and capacity is needed. Similar to communication and grassroots support, scientific capacity and the specific science performed can only be evaluated when linked strategically to the leading organizational and community issues.

While it is desirable to have additional capacity to allow for direct involvement in applied conservation biology, by both national and regional organizations, (including population assessments), it should be a secondary priority to implementing the communication, grassroots, lobbying, and political changes called for in this report.

Maximize Formal/Informal Science and Conservation Partnerships: There has been discussion among some in the community that creating an independent science center, possibly affiliated with a university or research institute, could increase capacity. Advancing conservation biology and training the next generation of scientists is an important goal, but not one the ocean conservation community is well suited to tackle. There is potential for individual scientists and select organizations and funders within the conservation community to play a role in fostering this important change (in fact, a few scientists in our community have and will continue to advance this cause). Even if such a center is established, the majority of organizations would be better served to focus energy on maximizing the usefulness of existing models such as COMPASS and determine what adjustments, if any, are needed to provide the community's science needs. In addition, organizations and individuals should expend more energy building closer relationships with academic and independent scientists, (the example with shark scientists presented earlier), including persuading them to engage directly in policy discussions and debates.

We recommend these formal and informal partnerships be used to tackle overarching issues such as the desire to separate fish science/conservation decisions from allocation decisions in the management process, as well as species or location specific issues (i.e., assessments, location of marine reserves).

Having said all of this, given the number of organizations and individuals within the community that focus on the direct and indirect impact of fishing, there needs to be an increased capacity of ecologists and population biologists within organizations or available to organizations. A few talented individuals such as the team at the WCS cannot carry the entire load. It is essential that similar capacity be available to organizations lacking expertise in a timely fashion. A so-called "SWAT team" approach has been discussed. A small team of scientists, with a decision-making process similar to OLP (independence to select the most strategic projects), could fill this important need. Strategic alliances will likely remain an important part of the solution.

We recommend that existing science capacity be enhanced through the creation of a scientific “SWAT” team that can provide quick scientific assistance on important questions.

Litigation Must Be Strategic

In order to be an efficient use of resources, litigation must be integrated into a larger strategy. It is extremely rare that litigation is more than a battle in a much larger war. It is almost impossible to win the war with a lawsuit, because lawsuits are always subject to being undermined in the political process. In bringing litigation, the ocean conservation community has paid too little attention to the needs of political supporters and the objections of opponents, and has failed to be prepared for the consequences of victory.

Thus, we recommend that the ocean conservation community approach litigation with a great deal more political savvy. We recommend that, prior to filing litigation, there must be a strategic plan into which the litigation fits. Such a plan must include, at a minimum: 1) an exit strategy; and, (2) a plan for countering any backlash the suit may create. In addition, there should be a contingency plan for what the opposition is likely to do, and what the appropriate response to that is, whether the lawsuit is successful or not.

Funding and Fundraising Must Evolve

At least two issues emerge when considering fundraising for ocean conservation issues. First, too many of the organizations are spending too much time raising money and writing grant reports, rather than focusing on substantive work. Studies of foundation giving patterns on the left and right indicate that the right-leaning foundations have been far more generous in terms of giving general support grants for longer periods of time, typically five years or more.²⁵ These foundations believe in the organizations and the plan they have to accomplish their goals, and recognize that success cannot be measured in one-year increments. They therefore give their grantees large grants with a significant period of time to demonstrate success. In the case of oceans work, foundations can solve whatever concerns they might have about giving support for long periods of time by requiring far more strategic planning up front, but then allowing grantees to have a great deal of latitude in how the work gets done. An internal

assessment should be conducted eighteen months into a five-year grant for purposes of course correction, but success should be judged only at the end of the a five-year period.

Thus, we recommend that ocean funders consider alternatives to their current grant-making cycles, by exploring opportunities to provide long-term general support grants with heavy planning up front, but limited reporting before the end of the grant term.

Cultivate Additional Funding Sources: The second issue has to do with diversification. At present, a very high percentage of ocean grant-making is done by a handful of foundations. While these organizations have been extremely committed to ocean conservation and there is every expectation this will continue, this situation presents significant risks for the continuity of ocean conservation work.

We recommend that a concerted effort be made to identify and cultivate additional foundations and individuals that will support ocean conservation work at a high level.

Finally, while the majority of our recommendations are directed at individual organizations, it is our strong belief that the charitable foundations and individuals that support ocean conservation have a vital role to play in advancing their implementation. In fact, only with the encouragement and support of their charitable foundation partners and individual donors can organizations navigate the course plotted in this set of recommendations.

We recommend that charitable foundations and individuals donors ensure that ocean conservation organizations implement the recommendations contained in this report.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are optimistic about the future of the ocean conservation movement. We believe these recommendations can help the ocean conservation community chart a new course in ocean advocacy and we are convinced that the tide can be turned. However, just as the community is telling policy-makers that bold, new initiatives are needed, the advocacy community also needs to embrace bold changes to move forward. Once embraced, the changes

we suggest will help ocean conservationists lead the nation to thriving oceans and ocean-dependent communities.

Appendices

Appendix I. Trends in Tax-Exempt Organizations

While there are many advantages to the tax-exempt status of a public charity, increasingly organizations are exploring the benefits of establishing other types of exempt organizations that are permitted to conduct a broader range of advocacy activities. Public charities are primarily organized to engage in educational activities – conducting research and educating the public about issues of concern. Although they may conduct some limited lobbying activities, the restrictions placed on public charities frequently inhibit their ability to use the many advocacy tools available to other groups. So many policy decisions are decided by Congress, state legislatures and local councils that lobbying in excess of public charities limits becomes a necessity for a successful issue campaign.

In addition, a public charity is absolutely prohibited from conducting activities that influence the outcome of an election for public office. Particularly given the lack of clarity in the law regarding what constitutes election-influencing activity, charities typically avoid any advocacy that might be viewed as affecting an election for fear of jeopardizing tax-exempt status.

There are many alternatives open to a public charity to broaden its advocacy activities through forming various types of tax-exempt organizations. A charity is permitted to form a 501(c)(4) organization that may conduct unlimited lobbying and some incidental political activities. In turn, a 501(c)(4) may organize a political committee to conduct activities to influence federal, state and local elections. Each organization, acting separately, has the potential to influence the policy-making process in very different and essential ways.

While a wide array of tax and campaign finance laws and regulations apply to each of these types of tax-exempt organizations, 501(c)(4) organizations and political committees have significantly more flexibility in conducting political activities in part because the donations to these organizations are not tax-deductible. A 501(c)(4) may conduct unlimited lobbying on specific legislation including ballot measures. Particularly as private as well as government funding becomes increasingly difficult to attract, lobbying to preserve government funding and existing public programs is critical. Public charities do not always have the ability to increase their lobbying budgets to respond to this challenge. Therefore, an affiliated organization that is permitted to conduct unlimited lobbying is often essential.

Similarly, activists find that even a 501(c)(4) is not suited to conduct the full range of electoral activities necessary to successfully promote their agenda. Many of the more effective methods of holding officeholders and candidates accountable for their positions before the elections may jeopardize a 501(c)(4)'s tax-exempt status. Distributing partisan voter guides, airing so-called issues ads and conducting other accountability activities are now treated as electoral activities that may not make-up the primary purpose of a 501(c)(4).

As a consequence, having a political committee is essential to adding this dimension of advocacy work to the tools available to push an agenda and persuade officeholders. A political committee may be registered with the Federal Election Commission or a state campaign finance board in which case it may expressly advocate the election or defeat of a candidate. This type of direct advocacy is increasingly important to ensure that the public is aware of where their

elected officials stand and cannot be done by any other type of organization. Similarly, certain types of political committees, known as “527” organizations, are formed to conduct partisan issue advocacy to inform the public before they vote about where particular candidates stand on issues. While they do not enlist the public to vote for a particular candidate, these so-called issue advocacy committees are widely and effectively used to generate public support for candidates and officeholder who are sympathetic on particular issues.

– Holly Schadler

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Appendix II: Non-Environmental Organizations

This group of organizations includes five organizations from across the political spectrum: the National Rifle Association (conservative), MoveOn.org (liberal), the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (non-aligned), the American Federation of Government Employees (liberal-labor), and Americans for Tax Reform (far right).

National Rifle Association

Laser-Like Focus Zeroes in on Success

The NRA was mentioned as being effective by numerous leaders of other organizations who were interviewed for this project. Almost universally, they identified the primary reason for the effectiveness of the NRA as the laser-like focus they apply to accomplishing their goal of stopping any infringement on the right of the people to keep and bear arms. The NRA attributes its success to a large and active membership, as well as an effective lobbying organization. As former Clinton political aide George Stephanopoulos said, “Let me make one small vote for the NRA. They’re good citizens. They call their congressmen. They write. They vote. They contribute. And they get what they want over time.”

The NRA is primarily a membership organization, with about 4 million members. It has an affiliated 501(c)(4), the Institute for Legislative Action; an affiliated PAC, The NRA Political Victory Fund; and a separate affiliated 501(c)(3), The NRA Foundation, Inc. In NRA Headquarters in Fairfax, Va., and in offices in Washington, D.C., and in Sacramento, Calif., the Institute employs a staff of more than 80, with a team of fulltime lobbyists defending Second Amendment issues on Capitol Hill, in state legislatures and in local government bodies.

Reasons for Effectiveness: Katherine Grant, formerly an employee of the NRA and now with the National Audubon Society, states that the NRA is effective because it has made the issue so personal and simple for their membership. Grant says that the NRA has found a clear, concise message that is relevant to their membership: “They want to take YOUR gun away.” That said, all of the other discussions about various models of guns and bulletproof vests become irrelevant to most NRA members. They do not care about the nuances.

Initially founded as an organization that promoted better marksmanship, the NRA has evolved over the years. When, in 1974, the NRA decided it needed to become more involved in politics and lobbying, it first worked to build its membership, primarily through its natural allies – gun shops, gun shows, places where gun owning individuals go. Having done so, it now offers excellent member services. Its web page is an excellent model – full of sports news, national news, local weather – and quite reminiscent of an MSN.com web page that can be personalized by each member. They offer discounts at businesses, insurance, etc. The NRA is also the leader in firearms education, which offers it a perfect opportunity to continue increasing its membership.

NRA Institute for Legislative Action: The NRA relies on a very simple premise: When provided with the facts, the nation’s elected officials will recognize that gun control is an infringement on the Second Amendment and a proven failure in fighting crime. The importance of this premise lies in the knowledge that, as one U.S. Congressman put it: “The gun lobby is people.”

In 1975, recognizing the need for political defense of the Second Amendment, NRA formed the Institute for Legislative Action, or ILA. The ILA is the lobbying arm of the NRA. The

ILA is committed to preserving the right of all law-abiding individuals to purchase, possess and use firearms for legitimate purposes as guaranteed by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

The ILA's ability to fight successfully for the rights of America's gun owners directly reflects the support of NRA members. When gun control legislation is proposed at the local, state or federal level, NRA members and supporters are alerted and respond with individual letters, faxes, e-mails and calls to their elected representatives to make their views known.

The ILA employs five to seven fulltime lobbyists at the federal level. These are not issue-experts, but rather people who focus almost exclusively on building relationships with members and staffs on Capitol Hill. Each is assigned to a region of the country and they become the face of the NRA to those members and staffs. They lobby issues, with an issue expert in tow if necessary. They stop by just to say "Hi." They invite folks to go fishing. And, they stop off with the PAC check, at the appropriate time.

The NRA has seven to ten state lobbyists who are assigned a set of state capitols for which they are responsible in tracking state legislative activities. There, too, the emphasis is on relationships. There are state NRA offices in every state and the national NRA lobbyists work with them. Also, during state legislative sessions, they hire contract lobbyists, who are often former legislators, to make introductions, to work the relationship angle.

The NRA has a science department, made up of issue experts, legislative experts, and gun experts. They have a legal staff that litigates, but they try to do so strategically to accomplish political and public relations goals. They have a very effective and active press department, working at both the national and state levels. The science, legal, press and lobbying staffs all work on the same floor as a team, all believing deeply that no one function can succeed without the other three.

Combined with the strong grassroots efforts of NRA members and NRA-affiliated state associations and local gun clubs, the NRA Institute for Legislative Action has worked vigorously to pass pro-gun legislation at the state level.

The ILA receives some funding from NRA member dues, but its main source of revenue is derived from member contributions designated for legislative activity. ILA claims that it is not associated with any firearms or ammunition manufacturers.

NRA Political Victory Fund (NRA-PVF): The NRA-PVF is their PAC and claims to be non-partisan. Their members are both Democrats and Republicans. They give money to Democrats and Republicans, although disproportionately to Republicans. Generally, if there is an incumbent with a good record on their issues, they support the incumbent. If there is an open seat and there is a difference in positions, obviously the NRA supports the candidate who supports their issues. If, however, as often happens in a congressional district, there is little difference between the candidates' positions, then the NRA gives money to both candidates, gets volunteers on the ground to work for each candidate, sends people to ask questions of both candidates. The NRA-PVF ranks political candidates – irrespective of party affiliation – based on voting records, public statements and their responses to an NRA-PVF questionnaire.

NRA Election Activity in 2000: In the 2000 elections, more NRA resources were deployed in critical battles than ever before. Twenty million dollars were spent on direct campaign donations, independent campaign expenditures, and on mobilizing the most aggressive grassroots operation in NRA history. Election Volunteer Coordinators (EVCs) in congressional districts nationwide rallied support at gun clubs, ranges, shooting events and gun shops, recruiting thousands of new political volunteers, and registering thousands of new voters.

To provide EVCs with campaign volunteers, ILA staff conducted nearly 50 grassroots election seminars in key states and districts.

In 2000, NRA-PVF was involved in 275 campaigns for the U.S. House and Senate, winning in 237 of those races. NRA-PVF endorsed thousands of candidates running in state legislative races and achieved an 82% success rate in those elections. It was also successful in helping to elect a number of pro-gun state attorney generals, key positions in the fight to stop reckless lawsuits against the firearms industry. NRA also played an important role in helping George W. Bush and Dick Cheney win the White House by activating gun owners in crucial states such as Arkansas, Tennessee, West Virginia and, of course, Florida.

Both ILA and NRA-PVF raise the funds needed to sustain NRA's legislative and political activities from the generous contributions of NRA members – above and beyond their regular dues.

Lessons Learned: The NRA succeeds by being focused with laser-like intensity on a single issue, which allows it to keep its message simple. As a result, its base includes not just its 4 million card-carrying members, but the 60-65 million gun-owners in this country. By knowing how to talk to its base, the NRA is able to incite passions and motivate action. This grassroots support is then easily translated into electoral and lobbying success. In a nutshell, the NRA does everything and does it well.

MoveOn.org

The Internet as a Political Force

The ability to raise money has long been the measure of a political candidate or organization's credibility and strength. The amount of cash on hand is the traditional gauge used to separate serious contenders from the pack and the time-honored way to gain political influence has been to buy it. But the metrics might be changing, largely because of the Internet – what the *Washington Post* called, “the fastest growing resource in US politics.”²⁶

MoveOn.org pioneered the use of the Internet as a tool for growing grassroots involvement in democracy and is quickly becoming a force in American politics. As *The New York Times* noted, “For Americans not engaged by raw money as a worthy denominator of political life, there is an alternate universe of pre-primary competition at work – a virtual primary on the Internet this week run by a pressure group on the Democratic left called MoveOn.”²⁷

MoveOn's virtual primary drew more than 317,000 voters – a turnout that topped the number of voters in the 2000 primary in Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina combined. In fact, voter turnout was so heavy it knocked out the vote-counting machinery for a time. In the primary's first 24 hours, members had pledged over \$1.25 million to various candidates. At the primary's end, MoveOn declared, “Together we've been able to shift the balance in how these choices get made from wealthy benefactors and snarky pundits to ordinary, active citizens.”

MoveOn's primary, the *New York Times* noted, “...is but a baby step in field-testing the Web's possible role for democracy. But it does provide a glimpse into politics of the future.”²⁸ Already, MoveOn has inspired other online grassroots efforts. The campaign of Democratic Presidential contender Howard Dean has raised millions of dollars and attracted 128,000 cybersupporters as of July 2003 through an online contact called Meetup.org. Meetup.org was created to help people who share a common interest gather in person. According to a July 2003 *Washington Post* article, Meetup has 387,000 members signed up to

meet once a month on 1,300 topics. For candidate Dean, that has translated into tens of thousands of self-organizing supporters gathering monthly in 300 cities.²⁹

Clearly, the burgeoning use of the Internet as a means for building grassroots power, raising money for political campaigns, and ultimately influencing policy and legislation must be explored as a model for building the political influence and reach of the oceans conservation movement.

MoveOn was created in Berkeley, California, in 1998, by two married software entrepreneurs, Wes Boyd and Joan Blades. The organization, designed to generate web-based grassroots activism, now has 1.4 million members. Boyd and Blades started MoveOn when Congress was pre-occupied with the impeachment of Bill Clinton – an issue they felt was not important to the American people. The founders of MoveOn sent e-mails to a hundred friends asking Congress to censure the President and to move on. This message was then passed on to thousands more.

According to the organization's Executive Director, Peter Schurman, what makes MoveOn.org effective is "volume." He says the secret to volume is all about list-building – about gathering, maintaining and using e-mail addresses. They provide the grassroots names, action and horsepower for a multitude of issues (some they push in their own name, often in partnership with a range of groups) – from Common Cause and their campaign for campaign finance reform to the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and their fight against Bush's judicial nominees. Schurman shared the lessons MoveOn has learned about being effective:

- focus on large areas of disconnect between public opinion and public policy. Their two most successful campaigns – on the Clinton impeachment and the war on Iraq – are the best examples of exploiting the gap between what the public wants and what the government (or Congress/Administration) is doing. He says an organization has to move quickly to exploit these disconnects.
- position yourself in the mainstream – especially in terms of language and tactics. He says their messages are solutions-oriented, not partisan, shrill or personal. In terms of tactics, we would never suggest taking to the streets.
- make the first action easy and then upgrade action over time – so start with petition sign on and upgrade to LTEs, phone calls, meetings with legislators, paying for TV ads.
- strive to remain small and nimble organizationally – they have six staff members and three of those staff members make up the board – (Peter, Wes and Joan). Their 2003 operating budget is \$325,000.
- keep to one thought per e-mail – people get overwhelmed if you tell them "these are the 8 things you can do." Also, focus on the main issue, put the action right up front, and follow up with supportive strictly informational links – avoid giving them opportunities to take actions other than the one you want, which will only reduce your impact.
- stick with populist issues and avoid what's hard for people to understand. You want something that will generate instant feedback and that's more likely to be around avoiding war in Iraq than explaining the benefits of a renewables portfolio. Their charge is to translate top-line rhetoric into action, not into a more profound appreciation of the issue. In fact, he says there is an indirect ratio between the number of syllables in a word and the likelihood of someone taking action – the

more syllables, the less likely the action. He believes the environmental movement is plagued by “wonkiness.”

- promote a range of issues and look for opportunities where a single action can make a difference. Anything new works better than something old – they are working actively now to marry on-line action to opportunities for off-line opportunities – meetings with members of Congress, for example. They have noticed that the opportunity to link on-line and off-line actions has increased participation rates.

According to Schurman, the reason for MoveOn is to provoke a response, hopefully on a dramatic scale. They know when they change the “ask” from action to money, the response rate will go down, but that’s the reason to maintain a large pool of potential participants. With a big base and compelling ask, there will always be some people who will give.

Their PAC, which provides their members the chance to give to Democratic congressional candidates in tight races – raised \$2.4 million in 2000 and \$4 million in 2002 – all over the Internet. In 2000, they were basically a pass-through; in 2002 they linked their members directly to the candidates’ web sites and kept count of what was donated through them. Up until their June 2003 virtual primary, MoveOn’s all-time best effort raising money was on behalf of Paul Wellstone – \$750,000. After the Senator’s death, they raised another \$600,000 for Wellstone’s replacement on the ballot, Walter Mondale, in 48 hours.

Critics of MoveOn charge that it is a tactic in search of a strategy. Why set up a PAC or get involved in politics when MoveOn does not have a set agenda or membership organized around issues, per se? According to Schurmann, the reason for MoveOn.org is to return politics to a more people-oriented process, to give people direct voice in their democracy, and to let legislators know that this is their real base of support and a natural base of financial support.

Lessons Learned: Money is only one measure of political muscle. In 2002, it was the GOP’s grassroots, intensive one-to-one “72 Hour Plan” that made the difference in getting out the vote. MoveOn’s virtual primary turned out more voters than the first three primary states in 2000 combined. But whether it’s face to face or through the interactive Internet, building political power and influence is being done increasingly and quite effectively, one person and one-email at a time.

Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association

Professionalism and Member Services Make This Organization Soar

AOPA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to general aviation that has approximately 390,000 members. Its emphasis on member service distinguishes and defines AOPA as a successful and influential policy-shaping organization. AOPA offers its members training, information in many forms about administration and congressional action affecting airplanes and airports, and opportunities to weigh-in on legislation and contribute to their PAC. On its website, AOPA solicits new members (\$39 per year) as follows:

“Join the organization that’s supporting your right to fly: at the local, state and federal levels. As the leading voice of general aviation, AOPA has been instrumental in protecting the rights of pilots everywhere. We continue to fight airspace restrictions, fuel taxes, airport closings, and any issue that threatens your right to fly.”

The federal government plays the predominant role in regulating civil aviation, a role that has only increased after 9/11. In its efforts to sway the legislative and executive branches of the federal government, AOPA uses an integrated advocacy strategy with a formidable array of complementary weapons. AOPA maintains a multi-million dollar lobbying staff, backed up by sizable contributions from its PAC to all the relevant players on the House and Senate aviation subcommittees.

The organization is so deeply intertwined with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that it has remarkable success in getting the agency to do its bidding. Nonetheless, AOPA is often one of the FAA's most severe critics, especially where the interests of general aviation are involved. AOPA has a state-of-the-art web site, a sophisticated public education and media operation, and a foundation that spends millions more on pilot safety education.

The aftermath of 9/11 has presented AOPA with an enormous set of challenges: "new concerns about security, new government agencies, and new threats to the rights and privileges of general aviation pilots." Although AOPA has historically supported Republicans more than Democrats, the politics of 9/11 have created some awkward political conflicts for the organization as it resists the more extreme aspects of the Bush/Ridge/Ashcroft anti-terrorism crackdown.

Another major AOPA agenda item is protecting all of the existing general aviation airports and landing fields. According to AOPA, on average the United States loses one public-use general aviation airport per week, primarily because of demand for land, particularly in urban areas. AOPA has also been fighting to prevent the closure of backcountry airstrips in rural or wilderness areas.

Lobbying Congress and the Federal Aviation Administration: AOPA maintains a large and effective lobbying operation. In 2001, *Fortune* magazine ranked AOPA as one of the most effective organizations on Capitol Hill. AOPA was the only aviation organization on the list.

AOPA has a subtle inside edge to its lobbying because small planes play such an important role in the lives of most politicians. Members spend a lot of time in small planes, and a number of key members are qualified pilots themselves. Members are more likely to be aware of some of the seat-of-the-pants issues that are important to AOPA members, like keeping small airports in operation.

AOPA President Phil Boyer did not mince words about what AOPA could accomplish on Capitol Hill in a letter in the fall of 2000 asking members to come out and vote and give to the AOPA PAC: "In fact, we are so strong that other lobbying groups have publicly recognized our ability to work with members of Congress to block legislation that would damage general aviation."

AOPA keeps its members informed about its lobbying targets on its frequently updated web site, as well as through their leading magazine, *AOPA Pilot*. The president writes a monthly column in the magazine, reprinted on the web site, that often focuses on a hot legislative target. In major lobbying campaigns, AOPA will formally enlist the help of its entire membership through Action Alerts, although such efforts are infrequent (only three times during the 1990s).

The Advocacy section of the web site begins with a list of AOPA's top current legislative priorities, with links to detailed issue briefs laying out the analysis from AOPA's

lobbying shop. The Advocacy section also contains instructions on how to contact members of Congress, including a long admonition against using e-mail.

Currying Favor on the Hill: Lobbying is easier if powerful members already belong to your organization. Both Senate majority leader Bill Frist and Senate minority leader Tom Daschle are members of AOPA.

AOPA confers an annual award, the Hartranft Award, on the politician or politicians who have done the most to advance the cause of general aviation. Sen. Tom Daschle is a two-time winner of this award. Sen. Trent Lott, the head of the Aviation Subcommittee, is another winner.

In the summer of 2002, AOPA staged another kind of outreach to members of Congress, putting on a Capitol Hill Pilot Town Meeting (see “Communicating with Members,” below, for more on town meetings). Twenty pilot members of Congress showed up, including Senate Appropriations Chairman Ted Stevens (R-AK) and House National Parks and Public Lands Subcommittee Chairman Jim Hansen (R-UT).

Political Action Committee: The AOPA Legislative Action Political Action Committee was formed in 1980. In the 2002 election cycle, in the House (88 races), 93% of the AOPA-supported candidates were elected, while in the Senate (27 races), 78% of the supported candidates won. Four new AOPA members were elected to the House, all Republicans.

In the 2002 election cycle, the PAC received donations from 508 individuals, and made total contributions of \$562,369.³⁰ These contributions were focused on the Aviation Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and the aviation subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation.

Communicating with the Public: AOPA devotes substantial resources to media relations and communicating with the public, and highlights its media relations successes with its members. A state-of-the-art web site (www.aopa.org) provides a public introduction to the organization and its many services. AOPA members also have access to members-only sections of the web site that contain huge volumes of articles and links to information of use to pilots and plane owners. AOPA has also launched a separate web site devoted exclusively to selling the public on the multiple virtues of general aviation (www.gaservingamerica.org).

AOPA cites its communications capabilities as playing a critical role in its response to 9/11, both for its members, and with the media. There were more than two million sessions on its web site during September, 2001, and its Pilot Hotline was getting as many as 1,600 member phone calls a day for several weeks.

Information from the web site appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *Chicago Tribune*, as well as on CNN, MSNBC, Fox, CBS, ABC, and other television and radio news outlets. In addition, AOPA representatives conducted more than 500 media interviews.

Communicating with Members: AOPA is an aggressive, active organization that communicates frequently with its large membership base through mail, print, email, and web sites. When it was founded in 1939, the organization cut a deal with Ziff-Davis Publishing to provide AOPA with a special section in each month's *Popular Aviation*, the predecessor of *Flying* magazine, to communicate with its members. In 1958, *AOPA Pilot* magazine made its debut as

a stand-alone magazine, severing the long-time connection with Ziff-Davis Publishing. Members now have a choice of receiving one of two monthly magazines,

In 1992, AOPA President Phil Boyer began holding AOPA Pilot Town Meetings across America, reviewing national developments in general aviation and engaging pilots on local general aviation issues. Boyer has since held more than 260 such meetings. (see “Lobbying above for a Congressional Town Meeting”). AOPA schedules 24 to 36 of these Town Meetings each year.

In 1995, AOPA launched its first web site. The current web site is state-of-the-art, providing access to the huge array of services the organization provides, as well as links to hundreds of AOPA, FAA, and other official documents. Some of this material is available to the public, but only AOPA members get access to the full site.

To further increase effectiveness on local airport issues, in 1997 AOPA launched the Airport Support Network. The goal of this program is to identify one volunteer representative at every public-use airport in the country. These individuals serve two primary roles, informing the association of potential threats to the airport and, when necessary, rallying the support of local pilots.

In 1999, AOPA strengthened its outreach to new pilots by buying *Flight Training* magazine, the only magazine dedicated to student pilots and flight instructors, and launching an associated web site, www.aopaflighttraining.org. This site shows how AOPA is using the web to bring in new members. For student pilots, there is a free six-month subscription offer to the magazine, and for use of parts of the web site. In late 1999, AOPA launched yet another publication — its weekly email newsletter, *ePilot*.

Lessons Learned: AOPA is very effective at connecting with the people it lobbies, many of whom are involved with small aircraft either as pilots or frequent flyers. Finding a way to connect to the audience, i.e., legislators, is key. AOPA also uses its PAC to augment, rather than replace, its other efforts. And, finally, it effectively works to get its own members elected, thus creating instant champions, rather than spending its time trying to persuade uninitiated new members.

American Federation of Government Employees

Creating a Powerful Entity within a Larger Powerhouse

When discussing political power at the federal level, the labor movement is always part of the discussion. Despite trends towards reduced numbers of union members, the AFL-CIO claims there are about 16.1 million members of labor unions in the U.S., more than 13 million of whom belong to unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO.³¹ Whereas the primary goal of unions is better pay, benefits, working conditions, and a voice on the job about how the work gets done, the AFL-CIO educates union members about issues that affect the daily lives of working families, and encourages them to make their voices heard for a government that works for working families. The AFL-CIO represents 65 different unions.

Like the AFL-CIO, the environmental community is another bloc of organized interests that is often mentioned in discussions of political power. The environmental community claims over 10 million members nationwide whose interests cover a wide array of issues, ranging from wildlife conservation to toxic clean up issues. The groups also cover an array of activities, including advocacy, research, litigation, public education, grassroots lobbying, political action and K-12 environmental education.

The ocean conservation policy groups form a small, distinct subset of environmentalists, not always recognized by policy-makers as different from the overall environmental community, despite their unique perspectives, challenges and issue focus. Similarly, the American Federation of Government Employees forms a distinct subset of what appears to policy-makers to be the monolithic powerful labor movement.

AFGE is the largest federal employee union, representing 600,000 federal and D.C. government workers nationwide and overseas. Workers in virtually all functions of government at every federal agency depend upon AFGE for legal representation, legislative advocacy, technical expertise and informational services. AFGE is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and divided into 12 geographical districts consisting of 1,100 locals. Over one-half of its members are consolidated into agency-wide bargaining units. Agencies with the highest concentration of union membership include the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Social Security Administration and the Department of Justice. AFGE has been nationally affiliated with the AFL-CIO since it was founded in 1932.

As a labor union, AFGE is in a unique position because it is not currently afforded the same full scope collective bargaining rights as workers in the private sector. For this reason, in addition to negotiating working conditions at the bargaining table, AFGE coordinates a full-scale legislative and political action program to monitor issues that impact the government work force.

For AFGE, Congress is the bargaining table because they do not have the right to strike, very little can be negotiated without Congressional approval, especially pay scale and benefits – the core of collective bargaining. For AFGE, labor negotiations are done through lobbying.

*“The government’s two million civilian employees have been reeling from administration moves to limit pay increases, open up more government jobs to bidding from private contractors and rewrite personnel rules at the Defense and Homeland Security departments.”*³² Even in the face of an administration that is overtly committed to reducing the size and scope of the federal government, AFGE has had some notable successes. The priority for AFGE is preventing privatization of government jobs. Some of their recent fights include:

- Playing a major role in the airport security fight and winning the fight to have airport screening performed by experienced government employees, which resulted in the creation of the Transportation Security Administration;
- Leading the fight to prevent prison privatization through involvement in the Public Safety and Justice Campaign. GAO and other studies conducted indicate that privatization of prison workforces does not save taxpayers money;

AFGE’s Political Director, Bob Nicklaus, attributes its successes primarily to their very effective legislative director, and the good lobbying effort he directs. He has built strong relationships with members of Congress and their staffs. In addition, since 1995, they have had a legislative scorecard for both the House and Senate.

Grassroots Advocacy: AFGE’s direct lobbying efforts are backed up by strong grassroots pressure. They have a lot of active, articulate members and active locals. They urge their members to lobby as constituents, not as members. For example, for an article in *The New York Times* on homeland security, people were asked to identify themselves as citizens concerned

about services, not as AFGE members. Political Director Nicklaus believes that AFGE wins on issues in Congress when they have the combination of grassroots support in the district of the member, have effective lobbying meetings, and when the issue has merit.

Media Outreach: AFGE has an aggressive media outreach program. Their communications efforts result in the ability to get a lot of stories about their issues placed in major newspapers and radio outlets, and also enables them to be quoted in stories that are generated elsewhere. A quick review of the articles and radio news stories in which they have been quoted in recent months reveals that the majority of articles are found in newspapers in Washington, D.C., due to the concentration of the federal workforce in that area. Significant numbers are also found in areas with concentrations of federal workers, such as Pittsburgh, PA and Milwaukee, WI.

Relationships with other groups: AFGE leadership has identified that to increase their effectiveness they need both to increase the activism of their members and to work much more in broader coalitions. They have long been supportive of and involved in the AFL-CIO activities. Of late however, they are reaching out to more non-traditional allies. For example, AFGE recently sent a letter to all members of the Senate and House of Representatives urging them to fight against privatization of the services provided by the Department of Interior, persuading 37 environmental, labor and civil rights groups to sign on. They are working with environmental organizations to stop legislation changing the regulations that govern the Department of Defense. They are working with women's groups, retirees groups (AARP), and civil rights groups to stop reorganization of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, without opportunity to comment by the various stakeholders.

Political: Because Congress is the bargaining table for AFGE, their PAC is critical. They are too small of a PAC to run a lot of independent expenditures, but they need to be heard, so that doors are open to their lobbyists.

In 2002, the PAC gave every senate race and some important (and close) house races \$2,500. There is an assumption that they would give the major Democratic Party political committees – the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the Democratic National Committee each \$5,000. This involvement ensures that their phone calls are returned, and that they have an opportunity to discuss the merits of the issue.

Beyond these core expenditures on the part of the PAC, the cornerstone of their strategy is to support and build champions on key committees with additional support.

Lessons Learned: As a moderate-sized union, confronted by an Administration that is overtly opposed to their interests, they understand that their voice is limited by law to having few traditional union tools for negotiating. Nonetheless, they have many successes because they have decided to focus on a narrowly defined set of issues. Their priority is to prevent privatization of the workforce and they find the groups they need to work with in order to accomplish that.

As a result, they have an established record of winning, administration after administration. Their focus and unrelenting sense of purpose allow them to find every possible tool and to use them in concert to accomplish their goals. They have realized that they have

common interests with interest groups and so have taken advantage of that to build strong alliances around particular issues.

Being a distinct subset of a larger movement has given them the advantage of being able to carry clout into a meeting. When they are lobbying for an issue, there is the implication that the entire labor movement could, at any time, choose to focus on the AFGE's issue. On the negative side, legislators may think they have "taken care of" the labor constituency when they have dealt favorably with other labor issues, and possibly ignored the most important issue to AFGE. Thus it has been critical for AFGE to build their own relationships, their own identity, their own clout, so as not to be brushed aside in the issues that the AFL-CIO sets as top priorities.

AFGE has also learned to maximize their effectiveness by building and supporting champions on key committees. They use PAC money to open the door to their effective lobbyist. Their lobbyist has built strong relationships with the staff and members on the key committees. They back up their lobbying with a legislative scorecard and with strong grassroots pressure from their members.

Americans for Tax Reform

Using Alliances to Roll Back the Twentieth Century

Although Grover Norquist's official title is president of the right-wing group Americans for Tax Reform, the *Wall Street Journal* more accurately called him "the V.I. Lenin of the anti-tax movement."³³ This organization is not a typical advocacy organization, but rather is a vehicle for Grover Norquist as he moves an agenda. His plan, which began in the 1980s and extends to 2040, is to drastically shrink the size of government by cutting taxes to the point that huge numbers of government programs, particularly those associated with the New Deal, must be defunded and scrapped.

ATR was founded when Grover Norquist was chosen to head the group inside the Reagan White House to build support for the 1986 tax reform bill. It soon became officially independent and has served as Norquist's vast political operation ever since. ATR is best known for its "Taxpayer Protection Pledge," which has become a core commitment for GOP politicians. The pledge "asks all candidates for federal and state office to commit themselves in writing to oppose all tax increases." At present, 212 U.S. representatives, 37 U.S. senators and the President of the United States have signed the pledge.³⁴

ATR serves as a national clearinghouse for the grassroots taxpayers' movement by working with approximately 800 state and county level groups. ATR works with state taxpayer coalitions in all 50 states to ask candidates for state legislature and governor to sign the State Taxpayer Protection Pledge. ATR is a member of the State Policy Network, a network of national and local right-wing think tanks, and of townhall.com, a right-wing Internet portal founded by the Heritage Foundation.³⁵

ATR is a nonprofit, 501 (c)(4) lobbying organization. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the ATR total lobbying expenditures equaled \$900,000 in 2000 (the last year for which the data is available on the [opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org) website).³⁶ Total ATR expenditures were not available. ATR is heavily funded by a number of corporate backers, with the tobacco, gambling and alcohol industries figuring most prominently in 1999. Other recent ATR funders have included Microsoft, Pfizer, AOL Time Warner and UPS. In the weeks before the 1996 elections, ATR received a \$4.6 million donation from the Republican National Committee. The Americans for Tax Reform Foundation (ATRF) is a 501 (c)(3) research and educational

organization. ATRF has received a number of grants from right-wing foundations, including Olin, Scaife, Bradley, etc., and had total expenditures of \$1,244,171 in 2001. The two organizations have a total of 14 staff.³⁷

Political clout: ATR has put a lot of money into pushing conservative policies and candidates. In 1999, ATR spent \$4.2 million on a television ad campaign promoting the GOP tax plan. In the weeks before the 1996 elections, the Republican National Committee gave ATR a \$4.6 million donation, which they used in 150 congressional districts to send political mail and phone calls.³⁸ But ATR activist work is only a small part of what Grover Norquist brings to the game. “My goal is to cut government in half in twenty-five years, to get it down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub,” he has said.³⁹

Norquist excels in his ability to bring together various right-wing interests. In fact, *Wall Street Journal* editorial board member John Fund described Norquist as “the Grand Central Station” of conservatism because “all the trains run through his office.”⁴⁰ His Wednesday morning meetings bring together leaders from a wide array of right-wing lobbying groups and right-wing think tanks, such as the NRA, the Christian Coalition, property rights groups and others, with leaders of the Republican Party and Administration officials. This coalition was launched in 1993 to battle President Clinton’s health care plan, and has met weekly since 1995, when the Republicans took over the House of Representatives to strategize on issues of the moment. Some of the issues addressed have included supporting conservative ballot initiatives, abolishing affirmative action, and killing the National Endowment for the Arts.

Norquist has dubbed the right-wing alliance of social and economic conservatives that he has built in recent years the “Leave Us Alone” coalition. Norquist’s Wednesday meetings have become even more well attended since the arrival of the Bush administration. “The meeting functions as the weekly checklist so that everybody knows what’s up, what to do,” says Republican pollster Kellyanne Fitzpatrick. Representatives from the White House, the House and Senate leaderships and the Republican National Committee join the broad coalition of right-wing and business groups to make sure all parties are working together. Reporters and editors from right-wing media outfits are also regular attendees, rounding out the right-wing network.⁴¹

“The issue that brings people to politics is what they want from government,” Norquist explains. “All our people want to be left alone by government. To be in this coalition, you only need to have your foot in the circle on one issue. You don’t need a *Weltanschauung*, you don’t have to agree with every other issue, so long as the coalition is right on yours. That’s why we don’t have the expected war within the center-right coalition. That’s why we can win.”⁴²

Another key to Norquist’s success is his ability to pick the rising GOP political star of the moment and forge close ties with him. Norquist was one of Gingrich’s top unofficial advisors and a key proponent of the Contract with America. Immediately after then-Governor George W. Bush’s 1998 re-election, Norquist flew to Austin to meet with Bush and his political advisor Karl Rove. Convinced that the Texas governor was the Right’s best hope, Norquist threw his influence behind the Bush campaign, playing a key role in defeating Sen. John McCain in the South Carolina primaries.⁴³

Lessons Learned: Because ATR is so dependent on the personality and connections of a single individual, Grover Norquist, it does not present a very reproducible or even desirable organizational model. However, more than anything else, Norquist and ATR represent the power of strategic alliances and what can be accomplished when groups coordinate their activities and work together.

Appendix III: Environmental Organizations

Our next group of organizations includes two national organizations that focus exclusively on environmental issues – the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters; one regional environmental organization – the Chesapeake Bay Foundation; and one national organization that does a significant amount of environmental work – U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

Sierra Club

Grassroots, Media and Political Involvement Equals Influence

The Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. Since its founding by naturalist John Muir in 1892 to fight a political effort to shrink the boundaries of Yosemite National Park, the Sierra Club has embraced political action – direct lobbying, grassroots organizing and media outreach to raise public awareness, influence legislation and most recently, election outcomes.

In the 111 years since its creation, the Sierra Club has pioneered the use of new political tools and tactics. Muir organized letter-writing campaigns, in-district and D.C. lobbying visits and organized tours or “outings” for the public, reporters and most famously, for President Theodore Roosevelt, into the high Sierras to inspire and engender support for wilderness conservation.

In the 1930s, the Sierra Club was the first to use a documentary film as a public education and lobbying tool. In the early 1960s, photographer Ansel Adams and Sierra Club Executive Director David Brower invented the coffee table book format – again with the notion of using breathtaking visuals as a tool to advocate for the protection of wild places. And in 1968, it was Brower's use of paid advertising in *The New York Times* that called public attention to the government's plans to dam the Grand Canyon in 1968, cost the Sierra Club its tax-deferred status, and ultimately forced the organization to establish its (c)(4) program. In 1996, the Sierra Club was one of the first organizations in the nation to create a 527 and to use television advertising to do issue advocacy. And now the Sierra Club is using one of its greatest assets, its grassroots strength, to lead the progressive movement in the development of a coordinated door-to-door public outreach effort.

Today, the Sierra Club is one of the few organizations, along with LCV, that has the full complement of education, political, and advocacy tools at its disposal. To amplify their efforts and enlist new allies for environmental causes, the Sierra Club has invested heavily in media training and outreach at the local and national levels. The Sierra Club believes the combination of its political and media work gives it power and influence over policy and that its media and lobbying work enhance its political effectiveness and influence.

The Sierra Club has over 700,000 members, 65 chapters and 450 local groups. In the 2003-2004 election cycle, the Sierra Club will be using a combination of (c)(3), (c)(4), and 527 efforts to defeat the Bush administration and anti-environmental candidates.

The Sierra Club will use its (c)(3) Environmental Public Education Campaign (EPEC) to inform the public, strengthen and broaden the base of public support for environmental protection, thwart administration efforts to weaken environmental protections, and advance an environmental policy agenda.

For this election cycle, the Sierra Club's EPEC program has identified "Communities at Risk" across the country that continue to suffer from the effects of air, water, or toxic pollution because of action or inaction on the part of the Bush administration.

Through its 527 program, Environmental Voter Education Campaign (EVEC), the Sierra Club holds the Administration and Congress accountable for their votes and positions, alerts the public about the environmental record of elected officials and candidates and encourages the public to consider this information before voting.

Key components of this program in the past have been grassroots organizing, earned and paid media, research and message development, an early kickoff to frame the public debate, localized plans and training for local and regional staff and key volunteers. This cycle, the Sierra Club plans to invest more in direct voter contact – the use of mail, phones and door-to-door campaigning that will allow it to identify pro-environmental voters, educate voters, and encourage them to vote on election day – a comprehensive Get Out The Vote (GOTV) operation with the goal of ensuring and increasing turnout of identified environmental supporters and more volunteer recruitment and activity.

In 2002, the Sierra Club spent a combined \$10 million on its education, accountability and PAC programs. In the 2002 EVEC program, the Sierra Club ran 39 TV and radio ads, involved 1,300 volunteers, knocked on 31,000 doors to deliver literature, made 40,000 "Get Out The Vote" phone calls, made 266,000 voter phone calls with educational messages, and distributed 1,004,500 total print pieces at doors, county fairs, and by mail. The Club's total EVEC voter contacts totaled 1,354,500.

The Club also has a (c)(4) and a PAC. In 2002, the Sierra Club's Political Committee (SCPC) sent 35 staff to political campaigns of endorsed candidates; gave contributions to 196 House and Senate candidates; endorsed 216 House and Senate candidates; spent \$800,000 to elect pro-environment candidates; sent 75,000 endorsement mailings to members; sent 85,000 GOTV e-mails to members; made 110,000 GOTV phone calls, included buckslips in a mailing to 750,000 Sierra Club members and included GOTV inserts in *Sierra Magazine* to its 750,000 members. In 2002, PAC and member voter contacts totaled 1,770,000.

According to Political Director Margaret Conway, the fact the Sierra Club has the whole mix of tools allows the organization to use its influence in many arenas. "The reason to establish a PAC is that it gives you the opportunity to coordinate directly with the candidates and their campaign. The donation buys you a seat at the table and gets your calls returned. The strength of the PAC is measured in dollars given. But if the organization has strong grassroots, they can contribute things other than money – they can provide volunteers, loan staff, host fundraisers, and add value to campaigns in a host of ways other than hard dollars."

And according to Conway the fact that the 527 is not allowed to do express advocacy is an advantage in today's political climate. "Studies show that the softer message that lays out the information without telling anyone who to vote for, that allows them to digest the information and make their own choice – works well with voters. It means they are respected and involved in the process."

Other (c)(4) options used by the Sierra Club in the past include IECs – independent expenditure campaigns. "The advantages of IECs are you are allowed to do express advocacy – to tell people who the should vote for/against and you can be in play all the way up to Election day. The disadvantage is that you have to do FEC [Federal Election Commission] reporting."

Conway says that getting credit – from candidates and in the media for effective involvement – gains the Sierra Club credibility and a reputation for effectiveness. Clearly having a good win-lose record also helps.

The 2002 Campaign Conway is most proud of and thinks worked best – despite the outcome, was the Strickland for Senate campaign in Colorado. “It was the right mix of willing electorate, appropriate targeting, the right amount of money. We took advantage of every media opportunity and responded rapidly in the free media. We had a good plan to start with and were responsive to changes in political environment. We had resources – organizers, volunteers, money, creative staff that did some fun, edgy stuff, was willing to take risks and take advantage.

“What really helped was that we had a kitchen cabinet of local people (political people, not just Sierra Club folks) on the ground who shared their opinions and gave us good advice for free.”

Lessons Learned: If earning influence is the goal, it helps to be big – to have hundreds of thousands of members, millions of dollars, and a sophisticated operation willing to take risks. But it has taken more than a century for the Sierra Club to gain its present prominence as a premiere political power in the progressive movement. Regardless of its size, though, the fact the Sierra Club has the whole mix of tools allows the organization to use its influence in many arenas and this, more than anything, is the secret to its success.

League of Conservation Voters

Bringing Together Environmental Groups for a Greater political Voice

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) calls itself “the political voice of the national environmental movement” and is the only organization devoted fulltime to shaping a pro-environment Congress and White House. LCV runs tough and effective campaigns to defeat anti-environment candidates, and support those leaders who stand up for a clean, healthy future for America. Through the *National Environmental Scorecard* and *Presidential Report Card*, they hold Congress and the Administration accountable for their actions on the environment. The LCV family of organizations includes LCV (c)(4) and 527), LCV Action Fund (PAC), LCV Accountability Project (another (c)(4), and LCV Education Fund (c)(3).

Campaigns: LCV runs Independent Expenditure Campaigns and endorses candidates in significant House or Senate races. LCV’s track record includes:

- Defeated 23 out of 37 anti-environmental candidates targeted by Dirty Dozen campaigns since 1996;
- Helped hundreds of environmental leaders to victory, both on Capitol Hill and at the ballot box;
- Had over 80% of LCV endorsed candidates win since 1996.

Holding National Leaders Accountable: LCV’s *National Environmental Scorecard* and *Presidential Report Card* are the authoritative record of how members of Congress and the Administration handle the most important environmental issues before them. The *Scorecard* and *Report Card* hold federal elected officials accountable, preventing anti-environment candidates from masking their records with pro-environment rhetoric.

Playing the Inside Game: LCV has carefully carved a very specific niche, which is very D.C.-centric, and firmly within the mainstream national environmental community. This niche is about clout. The clout is based on the *Scorecard*, on letters to the Hill, and these are backed up by the clout of the hard dollar independent expenditures and the PAC. PAC money and politics adds a dimension to the power of LCV, so that Congressional staff cares more about receiving a letter from LCV than they do from, say, PIRG, even though PIRG has more substance and credibility on the issues. Other groups know the Hill staff better, and the ins and outs of policy, but they are not recognized as bringing opinion leaders and voters with them to the table.

LCV is very much an insider operation, having no real “there” there to influence the public EXCEPT with the *Scorecard*. The *Scorecard* is widely distributed, carries the weight of having been developed by, and votes chosen by, representatives from 25 to 37 different environmental organizations, depending on the year.

LCV President Deb Callahan is a high-profile, regularly quoted environmental leader, but this is very much an insider game. Often she is seen/heard on Republican leaning talk shows – it does not really get to public opinion, as people who are watching those shows are not undecided about much of anything.

LCV does not have enough money, enough members, and enough voices to influence general public opinion. In certain specific districts, while in campaign mode, LCV can influence specific target audiences about very specific issues – geared towards one day, election day.

Public education and polling: The LCV 501(c)(3), or Education Fund, conducts significant amounts of survey research – state polls and national polls. The polls used as public education and candidate education tools, and are released to the press, put on the web page, and shared with colleagues. The Education Fund also designs Public Service Announcements, TV ads, mail and radio ads trying to elevate the visibility of the connection between environmental concerns, such as clean air and clean water, and voting, using messages, such as “If you care about the environment, vote.” It also develops state legislative briefing books, and conducts postcard campaigns about policy issues. The Education Fund has a strong focus on voter participation, including ballot initiatives, and cadres of conservation voter captains, and working with partners in communities of color to turn out voters.

State LCV Partners: There are currently 29 state LCV Partners, which are autonomous, sovereign entities with no formal affiliation, but who have agreed to work together as primary partners on a number of issues. These state partners add credibility to national LCV’s efforts, as all politics really is local, and add ground troops to activities such as political campaigns, ballot initiative campaigns and issue postcard campaigns.

LCV and Oceans Issues: LCV has not scored oceans issues, because there have been no controversial ocean votes. LCV’s policy is to pick the most important floor votes, in which a real difference between points of view can be seen. It does not score non-controversial votes. Then, when those votes that are both important and controversial are identified, a committee consisting primarily of legislative directors and executive directors of environmental groups, picks which 8 or 12 or 15 will be scored in that year. LCV would welcome the opportunity to score an important, controversial oceans vote. However, due to the nature of the scorecard, and the

many environmental issues that need to be represented, it is highly unlikely that in any given year LCV would ever score more than one ocean issue.

In addition, according to Vice President for Policy Betsy Loyless, ocean issues do not tend to be issues that help decide political campaigns:

“The public does not generally worry about oceans. They are big and seemingly endlessly capable of cleaning themselves. The public only cares about beaches and about Flipper. The public cares about what it can see, such as tar balls and medical waste washing up, and beach closings due to bacteria. In order to succeed, the oceans community needs to localize issues – to make it about the beach where the individual goes in the summer – and then generalize towards good ocean policy.”

LCV uses issues in the political campaigns that have both a high degree of saliency and a high degree of demonstrable contrast between candidates.

Lessons Learned: Participating fully in the political process is necessary to succeed. In addition, it is vital to learn from mistakes and to be flexible, to change course when practiced techniques no longer pay dividends, as LCV is currently doing.

As for the politics of ocean issues, Senate and House leaders are putting more and more emphasis on committee votes, which are difficult to track and therefore unlikely to be found in the scorecard. Until controversial ocean votes are brought to the floor of the House and the Senate, the LCV scorecard will not be an effective tool to hold members accountable. Therefore, it is more important for the ocean conservation community to look to committee leadership to persuade them to be the champions needed to push votes. Building clout among the committee leadership, using all the tools of grassroots mobilization, scoring, public messaging, and perhaps PAC dollars will require careful targeting, but can be done.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Turning a Beloved Natural Treasure into Political Power

It is rare to find a single environmental nonprofit that has such power and respect in state capitals and with federal elected officials within their region of influence. CBF has been in existence for 35 years. They credit this longevity, combined with their large and active membership, for some of their power and thus their effectiveness. In addition, they have a good board of directors, an awe-inspiring development program, and the president has his own family foundation. They are able to mobilize their large membership effectively and rapidly. And, they have built an ethic of respect and affection for a body of water that is imbued deeply in the sense of what it means to live in Maryland and Virginia, in particular.

CBF is very effective in Maryland politics, where issues around the Chesapeake Bay are perceived as the third rail of politics, as are environmental issues in general, although to a lesser degree. This year, CBF was faced by a shrinking state budget, a new governor (the first Republican governor of Maryland since 1966) and dozens of new delegates and senators (Maryland has an overwhelmingly Democratic State Senate and State House of Delegates). Despite extremely partisan public battles throughout the legislative session, CBF's Maryland Office was successful on several key Bay-saving initiatives, including increased penalties for water quality violations, strengthening Maryland's sediment control, storm water management, and tidal wetland laws, and minimized budget cuts to key programs.

Similarly in Virginia, CBF efforts helped preserve funds despite huge budget deficits. Despite trimming budgets across state government, including cuts in the hours for the Department of Motor Vehicles and public libraries, the legislature approved a spending plan that includes funding for CBF's environmental education programs. This is a tremendous success considering the extreme revenue shortfalls that confronted the state legislature.

In both of these states, the environmental movement is perceived as being CBF. For example, in Maryland, legislators have been surveyed several times and do not distinguish between environmental groups – generally, since CBF has 45,000-50,000 members in Maryland alone, they are credited with (and sometimes blamed for) much of the work done by all of the environmental groups.

CBF has also been effective with their congressional delegations. For example, Bay-area senators have introduced a package of five environmental protection bills that, if passed, could help fund upgrades to many of the watershed's outdated sewage treatment plants and strengthen environmental education programs and restoration projects. Maryland's two Democratic senators and Virginia's two Republican senators are sponsoring the five-bill package – with Pennsylvania Senator Arlen Specter (R) supporting two of the bills. One of the proposals includes providing \$600 million over five years, up to 55% of the capital costs, to local communities to upgrade publicly owned plants that discharge at least one-half million gallons per day. This would represent an unprecedented level of federal assistance to local communities for improving sewage treatment.

They have been somewhat less effective with the Philadelphia office of the Environmental Protection Agency, but continue to find ways to work with them. CBF has decided that at times it is important to compromise in order to move an issue forward and in order to continue to be seen as a powerhouse.

For example, in March 2003, the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program decided that by 2010 the amount of polluting nitrogen entering the Chesapeake Bay should not be more than 175 million pounds a year. The new target falls short of what scientists have determined is needed to restore and protect the Bay's living resources as outlined in the *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement*. CBF and Bay scientists had previously determined that a 160 million pound limit is the amount that would give the Bay the best chance of being removed from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "dirty waters" list.

Even so, this is a sizable goal. To meet the new goal, almost twice as much nitrogen must be removed from the Bay in the next seven years than was reduced in the last twenty years. "Although we're disappointed that state and federal regulators focused on what was politically acceptable rather than on what is best for the Chesapeake Bay, we're committed to working with the Bay states and federal government to ensure we reach this new goal," said CBF President William C. Baker.

CBF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. It is widely known by its simple and direct mission statement – "Save the Bay." CBF is supported by more than 110,000 active members and has a staff of approximately 175 fulltime employees. Approximately 95% of CBF's \$20 million annual budget is privately raised. CBF works throughout the Chesapeake's 64,000-square-mile watershed.

CBF is perceived as well rounded, moderate, a voice of reason – providing a public service, providing science education, boat trips, etc. Roughly 50% of their program is dedicated to advocacy, 50% to environmental education programs. According to one of their Maryland colleagues and former CBF staffer, Sue Brown, Executive Director of the Maryland League of

Conservation Voters (MD-LCV), the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is widely regarded as “the 800-pound gorilla of politics in Maryland.” She credits their effectiveness to their strategic use of their strong science program, combined with an active membership, and 35 years of teaching citizens of Maryland about the Bay and making the Bay into a core value of living in Maryland.

CBF has a long term goal – a score of 70 by 2050 on their annual *State of the Bay Report*. By 2010, the immediate horizon for this plan, their goal is a Bay with a score of 40. In 2002, the Bay scored 27, as measured by water clarity, lack of toxic contaminants, and an abundance of natural filters in the water and on the land. In order to accomplish this goal, CBF uses a variety of tools with each element complementing the other parts of their programs.

Advocacy: CBF advocacy work leans heavily on technical, scientific policy staff. In Maryland, for example, they have 10 people on the advocacy staff who are technical experts on some aspect of Bay restoration or defense. They are very science oriented, not so very politically oriented. They focus on policy analysis, negotiation with legislative and executive branch staffs, serving as a resource on the implications of different policy options. The executive director and an attorney do most of the actual direct lobbying, which is a fulltime job during the 90-day session in Maryland and following 30-day veto session. The technical staff, the executive director, and attorney also work with the relevant executive agencies, in similar roles as with the legislature.

Advocacy: CBF has put in place an electronic action alert network, with 10,000 names in Maryland alone. This system is compatible with the broader environmental coalition action alert network, so that any given request for activist actions can be sent, by e-mail, to over 15,000 people with virtually no cost. CBF is not perceived as being particularly responsive to the concerns of its grassroots activists or members (in the Sierra Club model) but it certainly contacts them regularly in a variety of ways designed to keep them involved.

CBF members are active. This year, in a single day in Virginia, more than 4,500 volunteers removed more than 145,000 pounds of debris from 197 miles of state waterways during the 15th Annual Clean the Bay Day on June 14.

Litigation: CBF has done some litigation, but not a lot. When it does litigate, generally speaking it uses excellent, pro-bono attorneys. CBF’s strength lies in the fact that it has made the Bay into the third rail of politics in Maryland, and it does not choose to reduce that strength by litigating except as a last resort.

Media Outreach: There is a fulltime media person at CBF, whose job is to generate positive publicity. Annually, they release a report of the Bay Indicators, which always generates news coverage. The Bay Walk is on television every year. When there is conflict between environmentalists and watermen about crab limits, the CBF is often in the story. Occasionally, it has purchased some paid media, but not in the last two years. CBF also reaches out to the public through workshops, trainings, clean-up days, the annual Bay Walk, booths at fairs and festivals.

Environmental Education: Literally hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren have gone on Bay trips, exploring the Bay by boat or on foot in the wetlands. Some current members of the state legislature speak fondly of the CBF-sponsored programs they went on in as

schoolchildren. These programs are designed to train people to care about the Bay, as well as serving as an excellent tool for branding the organization. This long term big picture vision of creating a conservation ethic centered on restoring and protecting the Bay, for many generations of Marylanders, is a key element in the success of CBF's other efforts.

Relationships with other groups: CBF is considered to be pretty 'resource based' in its strategy. It puts its efforts into 'Big Bang' plans and refuse to try to be all things to all people. This leads to some resentment within the environmental community in Maryland, as CBF has come to be seen by many as some sort of super agency that can help folks with their more specific needs. CBF does not work on local development issues or pesticide issues very often, for example, despite the fact that these can have an impact on the Bay.

It is not always easy for CBF to accept that it is merged in the minds of legislators with the policies of other groups. On the other hand, it generally dominates the discussions of the environmental coalition, when it chooses. It is the real workhorse of the movement in Maryland.

Political: CBF works closely with the MD-LCV and the Sierra Club Chapter. Whereas CBF does not engage in any political activity, as a 501(c)(3), its voice is powerful in the decisions that are made in the community and especially with the MD-LCV. The MD-LCV works to recruit and elect pro-environment legislators and Governor and then holds them accountable in the press and at election time. The fact that the powerhouse of the environmental community in the state has lent its voice and opinions to the political arm, that it helps select the issues of importance, increases everybody's power.

Lessons Learned: CBF has a clear vision of where it wants to be in 2050. It has interim steps and a clear, coordinated, multi-faceted strategy to get there. Whereas it is clearly aware of what is going on in each legislative session and open to pursuing opportunities, it never loses sight of what it is it seeks to achieve.

CBF focuses on what it is good at – building a Bay-oriented ethic among generations of people and science-based advocacy. It aggressively builds both its membership and its activist core, which enhances the organization's power and effectiveness. It has become so powerful, especially in Maryland and Virginia, that it usually wins – even in the face of daunting budget cuts, but CBF leaders understand that success breeds success and that at times it is important to compromise so as to move an issue forward and to continue being perceived as an effective winning organization.

U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Research and Grassroots: Powerful Political Weapons

We choose U.S. PIRG because it has become a powerful force shaping state and national policy and legislation, but has done so without either a PAC or a 527. This fact alone makes PIRG something of an anomaly among powerful Washington, D.C.-based organizations and makes them worthy of study.

PIRG has two primary strengths: its reports, what its Executive Director Gene Karpinski calls "groundbreaking" research that is carefully packaged for the media, written in language designed to be understood and persuasive; and its grassroots organizing. PIRG's door-to-door canvassing has allowed the organization to raise money, educate the public, grow support and

spark citizen action. Ironically, this year's hot new tactic – face-to-face contact and recruitment – has been PIRG's bread and butter for decades.

PIRG's marriage of research and communications savvy, its 'outside the beltway' perspective, and ongoing face-to-face relationship with the American people has made it an organization to be reckoned with in statehouses and on Capitol Hill and a model for building political influence to be explored.

US PIRG was created by the state PIRGs in 1983 to "act as a watchdog for the public interest in the nation's capitol." The state PIRGs have been in place since 1971 protecting the public interest against the special interest. PIRG was founded by consumer advocate Ralph Nader as a campus-based, student funded organization (modest annual fees of between \$2 and \$5 were automatically billed to students). The first state PIRG was formed in Oregon in 1970 after a speech by Nader at the University of Oregon. One of Nader's first PIRG staffers, Donald Ross, wrote the blueprint "Action for Change" that helped other campuses organize their own PIRGs.

But it was the innovation of the canvass – the use of door-to-door contact to recruit members and mobilize action – that allowed PIRG to reach beyond students to local communities. According to PIRG's website, it is the organization's roots at the state level that "gives us a unique 'outside the beltway' perspective and provides the grassroots power necessary to influence the national political debate."

According to Gene Karpinski, PIRG is basically built on a trade association model. All the push for media is at the state level and by design – and in fact when they're quoted from D.C., they define themselves as the state's Washington office. For example a quote generated in Washington for the Massachusetts state PIRG is cited as coming from "MassPIRG's D.C. office."

The organization grows its membership at the state level. They have about a million members in 28 state PIRGs – 500,000 are students; 500,000 are members recruited at the door or over the phone. The national entity, U.S. PIRG, only has about 30,000 – 40,000 members. They have 50 staffers at U.S. PIRG, but 450 in the state PIRGs. Their combined (c)(3)/(c)(4) budget is \$6 million to \$7 million annually.

PIRG works in four basic issue areas – the environment, consumer, democracy and higher education. They decide their canvass campaigns based "on what's hot" – and it's almost always environmental at the door. In summer 2003, they worked on energy, clean air and forests. The canvass is their primary member recruitment and fundraising mechanism, according to Karpinski. "We don't fundraise in the mail. We find folks at the door that can't be found any other way – in fact 80% of our members don't belong to any other organization."

Karpinski believes in the power of the canvass and thinks it ironic that the political parties and other organizations have come to the same conclusion: "People are experiencing a higher appreciation for real grassroots organizing now. People recognize now and in the future that face-to-face communications, even town meetings, are the least engineered, most personal, most successful forms of voter contact and communication."

When they lobby, which is how the organization spends about half its time, they go armed with expertise – fact sheets, pure data – what the government is saying, and how best to rebut, what constituents are saying. They also bring a set of press clips covering report release to demonstrate the issue has traction with the press and the public. In addition to office/staff and member visits, they also use mail/postcards; phone calls and bring members in for two lobbying days annually.

Karpinski gives his organization high marks in five of the six elements he believes are hallmarks of an effective advocacy organization are:

- Research – data gathering
- Media – earned, working press
- Day-to-day, direct lobbying
- Partnerships – making traditional and nontraditional allies
- Grassroots – ability to work and shape policy and opinion outside the beltway
- Political presence – which PIRG does not have.

He considers the 2003 campaign to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as their textbook victory. They were the lead group quoted in *The New York Times* and they were leaders of the community, working with Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.). Karpinski cites the Arctic campaign as a perfect meld of inside the beltway and outside the beltway lobbying and grassroots – documenting for elected officials in D.C. where their constituents back in the state and district were on the issue. Their report made the case and was frequently used and cited by public officials and media in debate; they also used National Academy of Science data and helped recycle it. And they worked with the environmental community to develop community message.

But as a practical matter, Karpinski believes PIRG would be more effective if they had a PAC. According to Karpinski, PIRG's decision not to have a political presence is basically an issue of legal standing – because the organization started as a student group, funded by student activity fees. They have been sued about this arrangement and won because they do not do political work, but educational work.

Karpinski says there are people inside the organization who worry that the creation of a PIRG PAC or 527 would create a backlash and negative publicity, especially because of the organization's work on campaign finance reform and other open democracy issues. But Karpinski says the organization recognizes that its lack of political and electoral vehicles means it can only go so far with its ability to sway or hold a public official accountable. In fact, currently in Pennsylvania, PIRG is experimenting – splitting its original state organization into two – and allowing one to do political work.

Lessons Learned: PIRG has been a strong force shaping environmental, consumer and good government policy and law for decades. But the head of the organization believes they would be even more effective if they had a greater political and electoral presence.

Appendix IV: Fishing Organizations

Our last set of organizations includes two recreational fishing groups – the Coastal Conservation Association and the Recreational Fishing Alliance, and two groups representing various sectors of the commercial fishing industry – the At-Sea Processors Association and the National Fisheries Institute.

Coastal Conservation Association

Coordinated Campaigns Give Clout to Recreational Fishermen

Coastal Conservation Association (CCA) is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) that is active in virtually every national fisheries debate. CCA fights for “the health and longevity of our coastal fisheries and for recreational anglers’ interests in them.” It is a loose-knit confederation of 175 chapters in 15 different states with 85,000 members. The membership is made up of recreational anglers and sport fishermen. There is a small and inactive PAC, but many members make political contributions and make it clear that they are recreational fisherman.

CCA was founded in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) region in the late 1970s in response to a crisis with redfish (dramatic overfishing and declines). The organization has a presence up the Atlantic coast and into New England; however, it remains particularly well-connected and powerful in the GOM region. They have many well-to-do members some of which are also politically well connected. For example, four of the five governors in the GOM region are CCA members. Importantly, they were members before they were elected. The organization is made up of a lot of business men, and not surprisingly, they run CCA like a business. This provides focus and attention to their bottom line.

CCA was recently listed by *Field & Stream Magazine* (June 2003) as one of the most effective fishing/hunting organizations. They are also widely perceived by anglers, commercial fishermen, and conservationists alike as effective in local, state, and national fishery debates. Their record of successes is impressive and includes (1) helping establish gamefish status (no commercial fishing) for Atlantic billfish –white and blue marlin and sailfish – and redfish and (2) net bans in five states.

State organizations have policy autonomy. Potential issues for national level consideration are brought forward by local chapters and state organizations. This “bottom up” decision making encourages and builds support and buy-in from their membership. However, only the national organization selects the issues that will become national policy issues. Once an issue is selected, a complete strategy is developed. They do research (public polling and focus groups), communications (in-house or hire outside expertise), outreach, political (through lobbying), and litigation. They agree upon the “end game” before they ever get started. They know exactly what they will accept, negotiate away, etc. They also prepare for push back and have contingency plans. For example, they anticipated and prepared to defend net bans in court *before* they ever started the fight to get them outlawed. They have accomplished five state-wide net bans and *none* have been overturned.

The Florida net ban (along with several other net bans) is one of their major success stories. Their goal was to eliminate commercial gillnet fishing in state waters. The organization puts a priority on clear goal setting and requires that the end game is clear before it starts work on any issue. Polling and focus groups showed that the best path would be to change the state constitution. They developed a strategy following a similar (and successful) campaign to outlaw gill nets in California state waters. Their strategy included everything. First was money.

They estimated costs, including legal defense of victory and did not initiate until confident they could afford to do everything needed to win. Total cost was about \$2 million. They developed a communications strategy based on polling info and focus groups. Their outreach would make any group envious. They mobilized their volunteer members and collected 600,000 petition signatures. And it did not cost them a single dollar to collect!

The coordinating piece was their political engine. They currently have on staff or retain the services of about 19 lobbyists including an experienced political lobbyist/strategist in Washington, D.C. Their campaigns are governed by simple rules: Rule #1 – “Know how to count”; Rule #2 – “Know your opposition.” Finally, “Don’t live in a world of fiction.” Their political machine did its job and the net ban was adopted by the voters. Finally, they had their litigation team prepared in advance and successfully defended the net ban.

A key aspect of their strategy is to make sure that the people with the proper expertise are running the political, outreach, and communication strategies. Specialists frame the issue and provide valuable information, but they do not carry out the campaign. Specialists are kept busy doing their work and kept out of the political work. The political people who have money or relationships (i.e., the access) often are not the issue people.

CCA has 85,000 members and they can “touch them all.” They have a tremendous breadth and depth in their volunteers. When called upon they can mobilize large numbers of fishermen. And as highlighted above, many members have access to policy makers. CCA proudly points out that their members include a former U.S. President, former cabinet members, congressmen, senators, governors, Fishery Management Council members, and federal and state fishery managers. The organization services their members in several ways, including being involved in a number of projects, such as building artificial reefs and supporting fish hatcheries for restocking programs. Their members see these projects as directly benefiting them – benefiting them on the water where it matters most.

CCA litigates. Their Legal Defense Fund has been used to defend many important victories including their net bans.

Lessons learned: While CCA does not have a large or particularly action PAC, they are politically savvy and recognize the importance of electoral politics. Key individual members contribute to political campaigns, which helps provide the access the organization needs. The organization uses the relationships that members have with important politicians and decision-makers to reinforce long-term personal contact lobbying by professionals (Congress and state legislatures), long-term relationships with regulatory agencies (state and federal). This is all reinforced by their public education and outreach efforts. The coordinated campaigns that result from all of these tools often achieve the political clout CCA needs to succeed.

Recreational Fishing Alliance

Angling for Success by Working Capitol Hill

RFA is a nonprofit 501(c)(4) with a connected PAC. RFA also has a separate nonprofit 501(c)(3) that supports research. An active player in most national fisheries debates and many state-level issues, RFA has 35,000 dues-paying members with another 50,000-70,000 “affiliated” members (members of sport clubs or other organizations affiliated with RFA). The membership is made up of recreational anglers, boat and tackle manufacturers, and fishing clubs. RFA protects the interests of anglers, including their ability to fish, and proclaims to be “Your voice on Capitol Hill.”

Founded less than a decade ago, RFA proposed from the beginning that the problems facing recreational anglers were political in nature and would require a political solution. Its mission statement begins “Create a national grassroots, political action organization to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers” It is structured in a way that it can endorse/oppose candidates and participate in unlimited lobbying. This was by design, as its founders felt a 501 (c)(3) structure would be too “restrictive.”

RFA has never shied away from a fight and has ruffled more than a few feathers. However, it has in a very short period of time shown the ability to gain access to key people in the Administration, Congress, and certain state legislatures. When RFA formed, Representative James Saxton (R-NJ), who represented a district with both recreational and commercial fishermen, often split the difference on difficult fisheries management and allocation issues. He cared about conservation, but worked hard to keep all his constituents happy. RFA used its whole suite of political tools (electoral, lobbying, grassroots and communications) to show Mr. Saxton, as well as other representatives and senators, that there was widespread constituent support for anglers’ issues and he would be well served to support them. When the participants at a fundraising event, including Mr. Saxton, had to walk past picketing recreational fishermen, who otherwise would have been inside making a donation, the point was driven home. Mr. Saxton has since become a champion for RFA and recreational anglers.

Personal contact and grassroots lobbying is RFA’s focus. Executive Director Jim Donofrio likes to say that “Democracy is not a spectator sport.” He has found that people have a tendency to forget what a great system we have and need to be reminded. He adds, “We make it easy for them to participate in Democracy.” RFA publishes a newsletter and maintains a web page, in part, to keep its members informed and engaged. It recognizes the power of grassroots lobbying is in the grassroots. The organization has three registered lobbyists who lobby only on behalf of RFA. Like NFI and CCA, its lobbyists work to establish and maintain close, long-term relationships with members of key committees and their staffs. And they spend a considerable amount of time in members’ offices.

RFA has had a number of successes, including the “Battle of Charleston.” In this particular case, its goal was to prevent pelagic longliners from using the Charleston Maritime Center as a home port. RFA was alerted to the problem by local members. By the time the organization became involved in the situation, the commercial fishermen already had the endorsement of a popular mayor and other important people in Charleston. RFA responded by organizing a grassroots effort. The group did not attack the mayor, but rather voiced concerns and “re-educated” him along with the Parks and Recreation commissioners. Ultimately, through lobbying and grassroots, the mayor reversed his position and the longliners were not allowed into Charleston. The commercial industry filed a lawsuit against the city and RFA. RFA and the city defeated the lawsuit. Today, longliners are not docked at the Charleston Maritime Center.

A key aspect of RFA’s strategy is to build strategic alliances with other groups, in particular fishing clubs. RFA recognizes that it needs members in a particular state to back up its lobbying efforts. Thus, the organization helps local groups or clubs understand that the action of a single member of Congress is not enough, and that, by teaming with RFA, which can bring broader support, those local groups are more likely to win. Those that would quibble over how many members RFA actually has are missing the point that RFA is broadening its base, which in the long run, can be far more powerful than only expanding membership.

Lessons Learned: RFA recognized from the start that the problems anglers face are political and require a political solution. It uses a full suite of political tools to build political champions who will introduce legislation for it and block legislation it opposes. Its strength comes from a mix of limited electoral involvement, personal-contact lobbying, and the ability to mobilize its base. Moreover, RFA knows how to pick a battle, figure out what it needs to get done, and take steps to get there. Finally, RFA has a constant presence on Capitol Hill, state legislatures, and federal agencies, and this presence pays off in policy success.

At-Sea Processors Association

Strategic Alliances Diffuse Opposition

APA is a trade association representing 8 companies that collectively own 19 factory trawlers participating in the groundfish fisheries of the Bering Sea. While they fish in Alaska, almost all of these boats are home-ported in Seattle, Washington. These vessels fish primarily for pollock, which is turned into products like fish filets, fish sticks, and *surimi* (a fish paste used to make imitation crab), and is the basis of the largest fishery in the U.S. Together, these boats earn about \$200 million a year from the pollock fisheries in Alaska, but overall revenues are even higher because of their participation in other fisheries, like Pacific cod.

APA has roughly eight people on staff: an executive director, Native liaison, and office manager in Anchorage, an economist and office person in Seattle, and a lobbyist and office person in D.C. Its former executive director also works fulltime for APA from his law office in Seattle.

APA is widely perceived as being highly effective in both the Council arena and at the congressional level. For instance, in 1998, APA (along with other participants in the pollock fishery) succeeded in taking an anti-factory-trawler bill introduced by Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) on behalf of Greenpeace, and turning it completely on its head. The result, the American Fisheries Act, enshrined in law that factory trawlers would get 40% of the Bering Sea pollock catch and also gave the industry the authority to form cooperatives to harvest the fish. Most impressive about this stunning reversal is that it was done with the support of Senator Stevens. In 2002, APA was successful in convincing Senator Stevens to attach a rider to an appropriations bill making permanent the pollock allocations of the American Fisheries Act, which are worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

APA has also been relatively successful in blunting much of the financial impact of a number of court decisions finding the groundfish fisheries in violation of the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act. When faced with widespread reductions in fishing in designated Stellar sea lion critical habitat because of a court decision and then an adverse biological opinion from the NMFS, APA, along with other Alaska fishing interests, was able to use its influence with Senator Stevens to secure an appropriations rider delaying the impact of these restrictions and placing the authority for writing new regulations in the hands of an industry-dominated committee that ultimately rolled back many of the restrictions.

Much of APA's success can be attributed to the fact that it recognized early on that it needed to turn a faceless, Seattle-based industrial fishery into "a political constituent in the State of Alaska" and crafted a political strategy to make that happen. This was a priority from the beginning of its existence. A major component of this strategy was to forge a strategic alliance with Alaska Native corporations, which were in the process of gaining a share of the fishery through a federal program. As a result, Alaska Native groups now own about 40% of the factory trawl fleet, which gives this industry real political power in the State of Alaska.

Alaska Native groups not only own a significant share of the boats, but APA also has a program that hires people from Western Alaska to work on those boats. Its companies therefore have multiple economic ties with Alaska Natives, which makes them an Alaska constituency. Thus, when Greenpeace successfully got an injunction against fishing in Steller sea lion critical habitat, APA's sound-bite was that this action was costing Alaska Natives tens of millions of dollars, which was very effective.

APA also hires the right people. The best example of this is their luring of Trevor McCabe, Senator Stevens' brilliant fisheries aide, who was largely responsible for writing the Sustainable Fisheries Act and also the American Fisheries Act. Not only is McCabe extremely smart and politically gifted, but he has an excellent Alaskan pedigree, which gives them more credibility as an Alaskan political constituent. No one has better access to Senator Stevens on fisheries issues than Mr. McCabe. Similarly, their D.C. lobbyist worked on the Hill for many years and is very effective at communicating with Hill staff. In addition to these staffers, companies that belong to APA often spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on professional lobbyists.

The result is a highly professional operation. APA is a consistent presence at all relevant meetings. Its representatives foster and maintain personal relationships at all levels of the agency and with key members of Congress. It works on a narrow band of issues, which allows it to be highly focused. It is flexible and adaptable, where many in the fishing community are not. Again, the best example of this is its collaboration with Native interests. While to many this alliance was merely common sense, many in the fishing industry do not see these kinds of opportunities and pursue them. In contrast with the fishing industry in New England, which has a long tradition of rebelling against Magnuson regulations and observer programs, APA's members were pioneers in welcoming observers on to their boats and their fleet is the most observed in the world, largely because they recognized that such openness was good for business.

According to Paul McGregor, APA's outside counsel, APA's members participate in electoral politics "because it is part of operating in a political environment" and fisheries is a political environment. Although APA does not have its own PAC, its members have a relatively impressive record of giving large amounts of money to candidates for the U.S. House and Senate from the States of Washington and Alaska. Between 1989 and 2001, contributions from factory trawler companies and their employees and representatives totaled nearly \$700,000. While the majority of this money traditionally went to Democrats in Washington State, that trend reversed itself during the years that APA was pursuing the American Fisheries Act and the sea lion appropriations rider from Senator Stevens. With Stevens as Chairman of the powerful Appropriations Committee, some 60% now goes to Republican candidates.

APA's public relations machine is also finely honed. A great example of this is the Marine Conservation Alliance (MCA), a wise-use "conservation" group which brought together all the various fishing industry groups in opposition to sea lion restrictions. This group was largely the brainchild of APA's McCabe, who was very effective in making the membership of the MCA believe that they all had to stick together because the environmentalists would come after the other gear groups once they got done with the trawlers. Through intense lobbying, he was able to prevent sectors of the industry from supporting a fishing plan put forward by conservation groups. Another example is the "Million Meals Program," through which APA's members donate a million meals a year to charity. APA then touts this program through a "non-commercial" advertisement secured by sponsoring Alaska public radio.

Finally, APA is not above simply buying the research it needs to make its case. In response to sea lion restrictions, APA members, operating through the “Pollock Conservation Cooperative,” donated more than \$1 million to the University of Alaska Fairbanks in 2001 to establish a research center to look into “Steller sea lion declines, commercial fishing impacts, and ecosystem changes in the Bering Sea.” In addition to this grant, the PCC gave another half-million dollars that year to several other educational institutions for similar research.

Lessons Learned: APA succeeds through a combination of strategic alliances, hiring the right people, like the former fisheries aide to Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and spending its money to get what it needs, be it legislation or science. In addition, APA has developed an acute sense of public relations, creating good will where needed by reaching out strategically into the community and diffusing potential opposition.

National Fisheries Institute

Cultivating Champions From the Inside Out

NFI is a trade association that represents more than 800 firms in the fishing industry. These firms range from small, family-owned businesses to large multi-national corporations. It is the primary trade association representing the commercial fishing industry.

NFI practices a classical form of trade association politics, mixing modest political donations, long-term personal contact lobbying, long-term relationships with regulatory agencies, and public education and outreach.

Electoral Politics: NFI maintains a small PAC (FISHPAC), which bundles contributions from industry executives for members with seniority on the Congressional committees relevant to fisheries management and appropriations. FISHPAC reports donations of \$66,500 in the 2000 election cycle, and \$21,500 in the 2002 cycle. The total for 2002 was data reported to the FEC through Friday, March 28, 2003, and will probably increase. For the sake of a rough comparison, the United Egg Association donated \$137,000 in the 2002 cycle.

In the 2002 cycle, the primary recipients on the House side were members of the House Resources Committee that oversees fisheries. On the Senate side, FISHPAC donated to a handful of members who serve on committees that oversee fisheries management and appropriations. In the 2002 cycle, across both houses, Democrats got 33%, Republicans 67%. In the 2000 cycle, FISHPAC reported donations of \$66,500, 8% to Democrats and 92% to Republicans.

Lobbying: NFI reports a modest amount of paid lobbying (\$140,000 in 2000). NFI also organizes an annual lobbying event, at which representatives of its member firms socialize informally with, and also formally lobby, members of Congress and their staffs. This type of lobbying is especially effective because many of these executives are also constituents and employers in the districts of the members they are lobbying.

NFI runs an annual lobbying day for members every year, Fly-in for Fish. The Fly-in is well attended by members of Congress and the leadership from seafood management and regulatory government agencies including NMFS. This year, for example, the senior management team from NMFS including the director and his deputy participated in the full-day event. There is also a softball game between NFI people (the NFI Fishmongers) and Congressional staff (the Capitol Fish Heads.)

NFI provides these important relationship-building opportunities for its individual members with members of Congress, and with congressional staff. NFI effectively makes the people-jobs connection. This helps persuade members of Congress that supporting NFI's agenda is truly benefiting people (and jobs) in their districts. This contention is reinforced when a member receives strong constituent support for introducing or supporting a pro-NFI legislative item (and little or no constituent opposition).

NFI also gives awards to influential members of Congress. At its annual meeting in October, 2001, NFI presented an award to Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK). Senator Stevens was honored as a champion of the commercial fish and seafood industry.

Relationships with Regulatory Agencies: NFI maintains long-term working relationships with the relevant executive branch regulatory agencies through a series of partnerships dealing with food safety and ocean conservation. Such positive, trust-building partnerships provide much more open channels for discussion of other, more politically controversial issues, on the NFI agenda.

For example, in 2001, NFI joined with NMFS and Ocean Trust in a habitat restoration partnership that had a total of \$200,000 in combined funding for restoration projects during the first year of a three-year agreement. In 2003, NFI and the National Food Processors Association have teamed up with Cornell University and Sea Grant programs in five states to offer five intensive, one-day workshops on controlling *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat (RTE) seafood products.

In the case of NMFS, NFI has successfully "captured" the agency. NMFS treats NFI (and commercial fishing interests in general) as its primary constituency. NMFS officials often speak of the views of "our industry," which is typically NFI's view.

Public Education and Outreach: In addition to its legislative and regulatory activities, NFI also does public education and outreach on a range of consumer, environmental, and public health issues, usually in the role of minimizing or downplaying reports by federal agencies or consumer groups that the industry perceives as negative. NFI also does some modest "greenwashing."

Alliances: Another strength of NFI is its ability to partner with other smaller players. This may help explain how NFI is perceived as representing "fishermen" when in fact it represents many large firms including importers and processors.

There is a change occurring at NFI – it is responding to the dramatic growth of aquaculture and aquaculture imports into the United States. It has been estimated that by the year 2025, farmed seafood will constitute at least one-third of the country's supply of seafood. This trend is already seen by the fact that farmed mussels, farmed salmon and farmed tilapia are the fastest-growing seafood imports to the U.S. in the last five years.

NFI includes firms that deal with farm-raised fish, a sector of the business that has been growing very rapidly, increasing the organization's potential political base. For example, last fall, NFI elected a new chairman, Larry Cope. Cope is the president of Clear Springs Foods in Buhl, Idaho, and the largest farmed trout producer in the world.

Lessons Learned: NFI demonstrates that, when applied strategically, an "insiders" approach can be effective. Participating in electoral politics, even at a limited level, shows elected officials

that an organization understands the game and is willing to play. When reinforced with grassroots lobbying, again even at a limited level, properly selected elected officials can become true champions. At the end of the day, NFI has champions – not enough to always get its way, but enough to advance significant parts of its agenda and to prevent bad regulations and legislation.

Appendix V. Ocean Conservation Organizations Interviewed

Alaska Marine Conservation Council

Dorothy Childers, Executive Director

Conservation Law Foundation:

Peter Shelley, Executive Director and
Priscilla Brooks, Marine Resources Project Director

Earthjustice

Steve Roady, Senior Attorney

Environmental Defense

David Festa, Director of Oceans Program

Greenpeace

Charlotte De Fountabert, Oceans Program Director

Gulf Restoration Network

Cynthia Sarthou, Executive Director

Marine Fish Conservation Network

Lee Crockett, Executive Director

Marine Conservation Biology Institute

Elliott Norse, President

National Coalition for Marine Conservation

Ken Hinman, President

Natural Resources Defense Council

Sarah Chasis, Senior Attorney and Director of the Water and Coastal Program

National Environmental Trust

Gerry Leape, Vice President, Marine Conservation Program

Oceana

Andy Sharpless, Chief Executive Officer

Pacific Marine Conservation Council

Peter Huhtala, Acting Executive Director
Jennifer Bloeser, Science Director

SeaWeb

Vikki Spruill, President

Surfrider Foundation

Chris Evans, Executive Director

The Ocean Conservancy

Vice Admiral Roger Rufe, President and CEO

Wildlife Conservation Society

Liz Lauck, Marine Program Assistant Director

World Wildlife Fund

Tom Grasso, Director of Marine Conservation Policy

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Appendix VII. Acknowledgements

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Second, we would like to thank the representatives of all of the organizations who agreed to be interviewed for this report. So much of the information that appears in this report came directly from those interviews that it is impossible to adequately document it all. We learned so much from all of them. In addition, many of those interviews helped crystallize our thinking on certain issues, and for that we are enormously indebted. In particular, we wish to credit Andy Sharpless of Oceana for so cogently explaining the base-supporter-ally distinction, which we believe is crucial to effectively building a grassroots movement.

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Appendix VIII. About The Authors

David Wilmot has nearly two decades of experience in ocean conservation and other environmental issues. He served as the Executive Director of the Ocean Wildlife Campaign, a coalition of conservation organizations, for eight years. He has also served as the Executive Director of the National Audubon Society's Living Oceans Program and on the staff at the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council. He has a Ph.D. in Marine Biology from the University of California, San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Jack K. Sterne is a lawyer and activist with more than fourteen years of experience in ocean conservation, public lands, fisheries, and other environmental issues. He was a staff attorney at the public interest law firm Trustees for Alaska specializing in ocean fisheries and marine mammal issues for over four years. Prior to that, he was in private practice representing most of the conservation groups working on the east side of the Cascade Mountains in Oregon. He has a J.D. from Northwestern School of Law at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon

Kim Haddow is President of Haddow Communications, Inc, serves as senior communications strategist for Sierra Club, and previously spent eight years at Greer, Margolis, Mitchell & Burns, where she provided media strategy and produced advertising for twenty-two statewide candidate and initiative campaigns.

Beth Sullivan, an independent consultant, was the Executive Director of the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund for six years. Before that, she was the managing partner of the Campaign Design Group, an independent campaign consulting firm that was largely responsible for the 1992 Boxer and Murray Senate wins, as well as hundreds of others.

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