

JACK REED
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3000

February 15, 2007

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Gutierrez:

As the Department of Commerce prepares its spending plan for the fiscal year 2007 Continuing Resolution, I urge you to support the following Rhode Island projects included in the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Southern New England Cooperative Research Initiative: Fisheries management issues are complex and contentious, with serious ecological, economic, and social impacts. While managers, members of the fishing community, environmentalists, and researchers share the common goal of attaining sustainable fisheries, they often either disagree on the methods to attain this goal, or simply find it difficult to work together through the current management system. Cooperative research has been shown to be beneficial in improving fisheries management and building partnerships among the diverse stakeholders interested in these resources. I urge the Department to provide \$2,000,000 for the University of Rhode Island Sea Grant Program to form the Southern New England Cooperative Research Initiative (SNECRI). SNECRI's objective is to encourage and fund effective partnerships among commercial fishermen, scientists, universities, government agencies, and other stakeholders to engage in fisheries and resource-related cooperative research and monitoring projects in southern New England. The geographical location and oceanographic conditions make southern New England waters a continuously changing environment with both mid-Atlantic and northern New England species co-mingling. Management of the fisheries found in southern New England cross multiple management councils and jurisdictions. Further, many of the southern New England fisheries have experienced near crisis situations for which additional data are necessary to identify appropriate future management strategies. The SNECRI will advance scientific knowledge about the southern New England fisheries, which will improve management of these species in New England and the Mid-Atlantic.

McKendall Open Space, North Kingstown, RI: I urge the Department to provide \$1,500,000 under the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) for the Town of North Kingstown to protect 65 acres of coastal property in North Kingstown, Rhode Island. The Department of Commerce included this property in its priority list of projects eligible for funding under the CELCP in FY2007. The acquisition will protect the last unprotected large undeveloped parcels on Mill Creek. Land in this area is under intense development pressure due to its close proximity to Wickford Village, Quonset Point, and highly desirable waterfront location. The Town of North Kingstown has identified this parcel

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202-512-2442
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WASHINGTON, DC 20540-1099
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1-800-294-4200
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as a high priority for protection. The benefits include habitat preservation of coastal and freshwater wetlands, and preservation of coastal habitat and associated upland habitats.

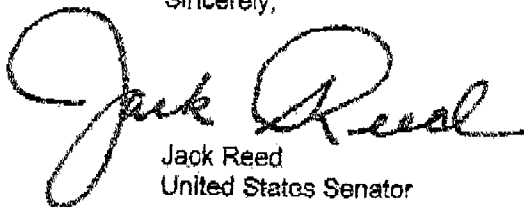
Save the Bay's "Explore the Bay" Marine Education Program: The Save the Bay's Explore the Bay Marine Education Program supports research analysis, curriculum development, and operation of youth and adult programs focused on the study, cleanup, and preservation of Narragansett Bay. Save the Bay, southeastern New England's largest environmental organization, provides both classroom and "on the Bay" experiences to youth and adults with limited economic and educational resources. The target audience for the marine education program is middle schools students with a special focus on underserved children in Rhode Island's urban areas. Prior to federal funding, the program served about 11,000 students, primarily from school districts that could afford to pay a portion of the program costs. With federal support, the program's enrollment is approaching 30,000, with a growing number of students from Providence, Central Falls, and other communities whose students would otherwise be unable to participate. The program provides enhanced science educational opportunities and fosters a respect for the economic, recreational, and environmental benefits of Narragansett Bay. The program also benefits Save the Bay's mission as a cooperative research arm and a vital link to the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NBNERR). I urge the Department to provide \$500,000 for this important program.

Okeanos Explorer: In FY2005, Senator Dodd and I working with Senator Inouye secured \$18 million for the decommissioning, retrofit, and transfer to NOAA of a T-AGOS to serve as a dedicated ocean exploration ship. I urge the Department to provide sufficient funding to complete the conversion of the ship by spring of 2008. I want to thank the Department and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for choosing Quonset Point/Davisville, Rhode Island as the future homeport of the *Okeanos Explorer*. The ship will conduct pioneering research and discovery expeditions which will support NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration.

Thank you for your consideration of these important Rhode Island priorities.

If you or your staff has any questions, please feel free to call me or Kris Sarri of my staff at (202)224-4642.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator

cc: Administrator Lautenbacher