

Nader'08 Gonzalez

ISSUE STATEMENT Environment – Climate Change

To illustrate how little has changed in four years, other than conditions becoming worse, the 2008 Nader/Gonzalez campaign is posting these policy positions on various injustices, necessities, and redirections that were prepared initially for the 2004 Nader/Camejo campaign. Such a short historical context should give our supporters and viewers an even greater sense of urgency to stop the corporate interests' and the corporate governments' autocratic control -- and the resulting deterioration -- of our society and country.

Global Climate Change Requires Us to Break Our Addiction to Fossil Fuels

The Nader campaign believes it is time to break our addiction to fossil fuels. The evidence of global warming is mounting. We threaten the global environment with our continued use of fossil fuels. Not only is this an ecological threat, it is a tremendous economic threat, facing all of humanity. Global warming will bankrupt the re-insurance industry, spread infectious tropical diseases, cause massive ecological disruption, and increased severe and unpredictable weather all of which will significantly impact commerce, agriculture, and communities across America and throughout the world.

We urge a new clean energy policy that no longer subsidizes entrenched oil, nuclear, electric and coal mining interests -- an energy policy that is efficient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly. We need to invest in a diversified energy policy including renewable energy like wind and other forms of solar power, more efficient automobiles, homes and businesses that would break our addiction to oil, coal, and atomic power. A new clean energy paradigm will mean more jobs, more efficiency, greater security, environmental protection, and increased health.

The Nader campaign endorses the statement below, Greenpeace on Climate Change, and urges people to get involved with Greenpeace's efforts, as well as the efforts of others, to forge a new energy policy that is sustainable, efficient, and environmentally friendly.

See greenpeace.org for more information.

Greenpeace on Climate Change

For more than a century, people have relied on fossil fuels such as oil, coal, and gas for their energy needs. Now, worldwide, people and the environment are experiencing the consequences: global warming, caused by burning fossil fuels, is the worst environmental problem we face today.

People are changing the climate that made life on earth possible and the results are disastrous extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, disruption of water supplies, melting Polar regions, rising sea levels, loss of coral reefs, and much more. Scientists and governments worldwide agree on the latest and starkest evidence of human-induced climate change, its impacts, and the predictions of what is to come.

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It is not too late to slow global warming and avoid the climate catastrophe that scientists predict. The solutions already exist. Renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, offer abundant clean energy that is safe for the environment and good for the economy.

Other green technologies, such as the refrigeration technology Greenfreeze, offer viable alternatives to climate-changing chemicals.

Corporations, governments and individuals must begin now to phase in clean, sustainable energy solutions and phase out fossil fuels. Major investments must be made in renewable energy, particularly in developing economies, replacing current large scale fossil fuel developments.

At the same time, immediate international action must be taken to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (the gases that cause global warming), or the world may soon face irreversible global climate damage.

Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, the climate treaty finally agreed at Marrakech in November 2001, is a crucial first step in this process. However, the greenhouse gas reduction targets agreed at Marrakech are only a fraction of what is needed to stop dangerous climate change and the Kyoto Protocol is under fierce attack.

The US refuses to sign the climate treaty and take action to reduce emissions. With less than 5 percent of the world's population, the US is the world's largest producer of greenhouse gases and is responsible for 25 percent of global emissions. Also, governments continue to subsidize the fossil fuel industries, keeping dirty energy cheap while clean energy solutions remain under-funded.

Greenpeace is campaigning globally on a variety of fronts to stop climate change from the campaign to pressure the ExxonMobil and George W. Bush to work with the rest of the world to halt climate change to researching and promoting clean energy solutions.

Protecting the Oceans

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (COP) issued a report on April 20, 2004 that recognizes that the coasts and oceans are in serious trouble. The problems on our coasts and oceans are caused by bad decisions by government that allow overfishing for the global seafood market, in addition to coastal development and sprawl, agricultural and industrial, pollution and fossil-fuel driven climate change.

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The report echoes concerns raised by the independent Pew Oceans Commission report that came out in June 2003. While the two commissions made similar findings, they had different recommendations. Pew's commission was made up of scientists, fishermen, and environmentalists; US COP emphasized industry reps, academics and admirals. Not surprisingly, the former had stronger recommendations. Below is a comparison by the Blue Frontier Campaign -- a non-profit environmental group.

They both agree on the need for Ecosystem management (recognizing that nature doesn't recognize political boundaries). They both call for a National Ocean Council within the White House. But where Pew also calls for an independent ocean agency, COP suggests strengthening the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), while keeping it within the trade-driven Department of Commerce. Where Pew suggests establishing Watershed based Regional Councils to carry out ecosystems management, COP suggests establishing voluntary programs on a trial basis. While Pew suggests establishing no-take Marine Protected Areas (like National Parks in the sea), that could also help restore depleted fisheries, COP takes a far more timid position calling for more study and definition.

Both Commissions call for reorganizing fisheries management to separate the science ("dead fish tend not to reproduce") from the allocation ("who gets the last fish?") The U.S. Commission doesn't really challenge built-in conflict-of-interest however. The eight regional fisheries councils that set fishing policy in US waters are the only federal regulatory bodies exempted from conflict-of-interest law. The result is they're dominated by the fishing industry. The original idea is that the fishermen had the expertise, which is true. They're expert at killing fish. Now even many fishermen are suggesting it's time for a more radical change.

The Nader Campaign shares the views of the Blue Frontier Campaign's official comments on the US Commission on Ocean Policy Draft Report, which are on the web at bluefront.org and reprinted below.

Public Comment on US Commission on Ocean Policy Draft Report: Submitted by David Helvarg, President Blue Frontier Campaign, Washington, DC:

America is and always has been an Oceanic society. From the Bering Sea Land-bridge to the Jamestown Settlement to the processing lines of Ellis Island we have been a tempest tossed people, a saltwater people, a coastal people.

We have lived well on the abundance of our seas and coastlines from the earliest canoe tribes setting fish-traps along the Jersey shore, to today's giant gantry crane operators unloading container ships at the Port of Long Beach.

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As the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy Draft Report emphasizes, America owes much of its wealth, bounty and heritage to the blue in our red, white and blue. It provides us the oxygen we need to breath, is a driver of climate and weather, brings rain to our farmers and food to our tables. It provides us recreation, transportation, food, medicine, energy, security, and a sense of awe and wonder from sea to shining sea.

Our oceans also extend our identity as a frontier nation. Unfortunately our frontier waters are facing a cascading series of disasters that could turn America and the world's oceans into dead seas within our lifetime. We are witnessing the collapse of marine wildlife with over 90% of the world's large fish decimated by unrestrained global fishing. We're seeing our nearshore waters poisoned by toxic and nutrient runoff from factory farms and city streets, leading to growing numbers of beach closures, harmful algal blooms and oxygen-depleted dead zones where nothing can live. Uncontrolled coastal sprawl is degrading and destroying the salt-marshes, mangroves, seagrass meadows, and barrier islands that act as the filters and nurseries of the seas, while fossil-fuel fired climate change, which the draft report unfortunately fails to address in a meaningful way is causing sea-level rise, beach erosion, coral bleaching and intensified hurricanes that put growing numbers of Americans at risk.

What the Draft report confirms is that there are common sense solutions that can save our blue frontier. Protecting and restoring our nation's public seas makes sense both morally and economically. Healthy seas also help assure vibrant coastal communities and economies.

Protecting our blue frontier has to be as integral a part of our public polices as protecting our terrestrial environment, our trade routes, our health, our sciences, and our national security, because in the end, they too depend on our oceans. Just as broad sectors of the nation mobilized in the last century for passage of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts that have helped revitalize our environment, and improved the quality of our lives, the time is right for an American Oceans Act for the 21st Century.

Having reviewed the Ocean Commission Draft Report and its more than 200 recommendations, we believe that the following key principles should to be incorporated in US Ocean Policies and also be used to inform any Ocean Act that focuses on on erring on the side of what is known about how marine ecosystems function.

- Commit the funding necessary to reduce overcapacity and harmful practices in our fishing fleet while assuring the long-term viability of fishing communities through collaborative efforts free of conflict-of-interest. Expand the commitment to ocean exploration and science needed to better understand our living seas, while fully protecting special areas of interest in our public seas such as unique coral reefs, deep-sea sponge gardens, submarine mountains, and kelp forests.

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- Reduce polluted runoff into coastal waters. Establish and cap total daily maximum loads for pollutants flowing down America's rivers and waterways. Commit to upgrading our national sewage treatment infrastructure to improve both public health and the environment. Commit to nutrient reduction programs for agriculture, urban storm drains, tailpipe emissions and other sources, and expand public education on the problems of dumping waste on streets and down storm drains. Reduce the dumping of toxic wastes and plastics into our waters. Assure that shipping and port operations are done in a coordinated, economically and environmentally beneficial way that does not spread contaminated sediments or exotic species.
- Establish watershed based regional planning that recognizes the link between land and water protection for our families and our future. Develop incentives for more permeable roads, parking lots, and other urban surfaces to reduce polluted runoff and recharge our aquifers. Through zoning, tax-incentives and other democratic means encourage sustainable development that includes urban brown fields, conservation easements, and setbacks from high-risk areas of coastal flooding and erosion. Assure public access to public beaches. Reform or eliminate federal subsidies that place people in harm's way. Expand the Coastal Barrier Resources Act to protect those areas at highest risk of storm surge and flooding, while providing full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Work for full and vigorous enforcement of Clean Water Act provisions that protect coastal wetlands and salt marshes.
- Control and mitigate climate change impacts. It's unfortunate the commission draft report did not more fully address the critical role of human-enhanced climate change on our oceans. We need to commit full funding to the Estuaries Restoration Act, and support efforts to restore coastal Louisiana, the Everglades, and other projects that enhance mangroves, salt marshes, barrier islands, coral reefs, and other ecosystems that act as protective storm barriers for America's coastlines. Support efforts aimed at a rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewable non-carbon based energy systems, including a full re-evaluation of energy-development in our offshore waters. By becoming a leader in new energy technologies the United States will not only help protect itself from the impacts of climate change, but can also regain its competitive edge in the global energy market while achieving true energy independence.
- Create a new model of public governance for our public seas. Recognizing all Americans have a common stake in our Blue Frontier we need to unify America's ocean management systems. This has to be based on the precautionary principle (what the report calls ecosystems management), a recognition of the unitary nature of water from the top of our watersheds to the depths of our seas, and an understanding that when we do harm to the parts, we damage the whole.

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Ocean Management should be multi-jurisdictional, open to public participation, and transparent. Decision-making should be based on the best available science and the ethical standards of society.

At the regional level it should be organized around watersheds rather than arbitrary political boundaries and include participants from local, state, tribal and federal agencies.

Nationally there should be an independent ocean agency, a kind of EPA for the seas, whose primary mission is the sustainable use, exploration, protection and restoration of America's seas as a common public trust. In addition, following the Commission recommendation, there should be an interagency national oceans council within the executive branch to coordinate the work of all agencies that impact America's seas.

We believe this is all necessary and achievable but only when we're able to mobilize a seaweed rebellion of citizen activism and convince large sectors of the public who get so much out of our living seas that it's now time to give something back. As has been said before, when the people lead the leaders will follow.

The Nader Campaign is committed to stewardship of the oceans, their protection, and restoration of America's seas and coastline. The Nader Campaign urges immediate action to restore one of the great public trusts of the United States.