

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

**The Honorable Leon Panetta
Chairman, Pew Oceans Commission**

Q: Please provide the default or backdrop for the theory of regional fisheries management councils such that, when the council would otherwise endlessly deliberate an issue without coming to a conclusion, there is still forward progress made. Why do you feel it best to formalize the regional councils? Why not have a national council and allow the regional councils to remain informal?

A: The Pew Oceans Commission recommends formally establishing a national oceans council and regional ecosystem councils. The Commission believes that a formal national council is needed to coordinate implementation of a national oceans policy among the many federal agencies whose activities affect the health of ocean ecosystems. We believe that this is a significant undertaking in its own right. If the national council were to become involved in regional planning and oversight, it would likely fail in the important job of coordination at the national level, and it would lack the expertise and local knowledge needed to address effectively regional issues.

The Commission feels strongly, however, that regional assessment, planning, and implementation are the keys to effective ecosystem-based management. Regional plans must be tailored to local needs, priorities and conditions. This can not be done from Washington and must include state and, where appropriate, tribal authorities with jurisdiction over marine resources. Further, such a large undertaking would be unlikely to be successful, or even get started, were it to rely entirely on informal and voluntary approaches. The enormity of the task and the need for an authoritative entity to drive meaningful progress in protecting, maintaining and restoring marine ecosystems requires formal, legal establishment of the forum and processes.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is instructive in this regard. Operational aspects of the program are voluntary, but its structure is formalized in law and in the agreements among the parties to the program. Even with a formal structure, the program has failed to achieve its restoration goals. The Commission feels this is because the program has relied on voluntary measures to achieve its ends. As a result, formal establishment of the structure and processes for regional ocean governance is a prerequisite, but not a guarantee, of success.