



DOVER – Gov. Jack Markell joined governors from other Mid-Atlantic states Thursday in an interstate agreement committed to improving ocean health by creating the Governors Mid-Atlantic Council on Oceans. Recognizing that renewable offshore energy can foster a more efficient and sustainable regional economy and improve the quality of life for citizens, the governors are creating a structure for the states to collaborate on improving energy security and independence in the region through development of offshore renewable energy while accommodating other ocean uses.

The agreement was announced at the Mid-Atlantic Governors Ocean Summit at the Borough of Manhattan College, which was attended by New York Gov. David Paterson, New Jersey Gov. John Corzine and representatives of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and the offices of Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, and Virginia Governor Tim Kaine. They were also joined by White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco, New York Secretary of State Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis, and actor/activist Sam Waterston.

"Delaware is known for its great beaches and scenic views of the Atlantic," Markell said. "This historic agreement will protect our ocean and enhance our opportunities to utilize renewable energy sources and grow our green economy."

Waterston, a noted environmental advocate and currently the star of NBC's *Law & Order*, said: "I applaud the governors for coming together and for, in particular, agreeing to jointly promote renewable offshore energy. The oceans can be a solution – they can provide clean energy right now via offshore wind and help to create jobs and stimulate our states' economies. And, more clean ocean energy also means less carbon, which means less acid oceans and hope for a future in which corals and other carbonate life forms in our seas do not dissolve and go extinct in man-made pollution, but, along with all that depends on them, survive and then thrive, under our protection."

"Ensuring the health of our ocean ecosystems and the resources they provide is paramount to Mid-Atlantic oceanfront states like New Jersey," said Governor Corzine. "Any threat to these natural resources brings economic consequences that threaten jobs, local economies, and our economic well being. New Jersey is committed to working with our Mid-Atlantic partners to provide adequate safeguards and formulate a shared vision for the region's future."

"For centuries New York and the region have relied on the ocean to provide services like food, commerce, recreation, and transportation. We are creating the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean to effectively tackle a new generation of shared ocean issues and keep our ocean healthy for generations to come," said Governor Paterson. "I am pleased to work with my fellow Mid-Atlantic governors to leverage greater state influence on the management and future of our offshore ocean resources."

The governors will take action to address three other pressing ocean issues as they initiate their formal partnership. Those priorities include: increased protection of the most unique and sensitive offshore habitats; climate change and sea level rise; increased federal support for water quality infrastructure improvements; and reducing marine debris.

Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley said, "We are extremely pleased to join forces with New York, New Jersey, Virginia and Delaware and embrace a new regional approach to protecting, restoring and managing our ocean. Working together, we can and will ensure that the ocean resources for which we share responsibility remain healthy, resilient and productive for our children and theirs."

Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine said, "As an avid outdoorsman, I have a profound respect for our nation's natural treasures--including the diverse marine habitats and ancient canyons of the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. As Governor of Virginia, I'm committed to working with other states and the federal government to ensure the long-term sustainability of our shared ocean resources."

White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair, Nancy Sutley, said, "I commend the Mid-Atlantic Governors for coming together in this agreement to strengthen collaboration among coastal states to address critical issues facing our oceans and coasts. While we are facing significant environmental challenges throughout our country, we have a wealth of opportunities before us to make our waters healthier for the environment and economy. Regional partnerships such as the one created today are a great step toward how we all need to operate when we work to improve our oceans."