



RICHMOND – Governor Timothy M. Kaine today announced his participation in the Mid-Atlantic Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation, a partnership among the Governors of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia to protect the ocean waters of the Mid-Atlantic. The new regional partnership will protect and improve the health of ocean and coastal resources through improved coordination and minimized jurisdictional barriers, ensuring the resources contribute to our economic vitality and high quality of life well into the future.

"Our coastal waters are a vital part of our history and economy in Virginia," said Governor Kaine. "I am very pleased to be coordinating efforts and resources with our regional neighbors to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our conservation efforts."

By participating in the Agreement on Ocean Conservation, the Governor's agree to establish mechanisms for greater coordination on regional ocean issues, and to develop and implement shared actions to advance the partnership's four stated priorities:

- Collaborate on a regional approach to support the sustainable development of renewable energy in offshore areas;
- Prepare the region's coastal communities for the impacts of climate change on ocean and coastal resources;
- Promote improvements in the region's coastal water quality as a necessary focal point for regional action; and,
- Coordinate protection of important habitats and sensitive and unique offshore areas on a regional scale;

The primary mechanism of coordination will be the newly formed Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean, composed of the Governors of the five participating states. Each Governor will also designate a representative to serve on an Executive Committee that will report back to their respective Governors on implementation of regional plans and progress towards the partnership's goals. Secretary of Natural Resources L. Preston Bryant, Jr. will serve as Virginia's representative to the Executive Council, which also will engage appropriate federal, state, local, academic, industry and non-profit groups and stakeholders. A Mid-Atlantic Ocean Stakeholder Summit will be held in late 2009.

This new regional approach will encourage a cooperative and constructive relationship between the states, reducing duplicative work and unintentional conflict between the conservation efforts of neighboring states. Regional coordination also will allow greater predictability and efficiency in regulatory processes.

The partnership will focus on identifying critical ecosystem habitats and coordinate their necessary protection as federal and state policymakers continue discussing the potential development of offshore energy sources, especially harnessing wind power.

Another area of emphasis to the partnership will be ocean pollution originating from upland sources. Since watersheds that feed into the oceans often spread over several states, increased coordination will allow for more effective reduction of harmful runoff from both point-source, such as manufacturing facilities, and non-point sources, such as agricultural run off.

Virginia has invested \$1.1 billion during Governor Kaine's administration in sewage treatment plant upgrades to clean up the Commonwealth's rivers and improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, and subsequently, its coastal waters. Virginia has also invested \$57 million since 2007 to partner with farmers on best management practices to stop agricultural run-off into rivers and streams.

This is the most recent in a series of partnerships entered into by Governor Kaine to improve Virginia's environment and combat climate change. One of the recommendations of the Governor's Commission on Climate Change, formed by Governor Kaine in December 2007 through Executive Order 59, was "to work with federal partners, neighboring states, and regional non-profits to develop regional adaptive resource management plans that incorporate climate change impacts." Governor Kaine has previously entered into conservation and climate change agreements with Great Britain and Germany, and is using his role as chair of the Southern Governor's Association to foster dialogue and encourage best practices among Southern states to combat climate change.

Today's announcement comes as Governor Kaine continues to move his "Renew Virginia" initiative, a series of legislative and executive actions focused on promoting renewable energy, creating green jobs, and encouraging preservation of the environment in the Commonwealth.

The Mid-Atlantic Governors' Agreement on Ocean Conservation, signed by all five state governors, can be found on the MARCO website at <http://www.midatlanticocean.org/>.

For more information on Renew Virginia, visit www.governor.virginia.gov.