



June 30, 2016

President Barack Obama
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20500

Re: Monument Designation for the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts

Dear Mr. President,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we urge you to provide permanent protection for New England's Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area by designating it as the first-ever Marine National Monument in the Atlantic Ocean. This area represents a spectacular

underwater world of rugged mountains, plunging canyons and ancient volcanoes teeming with a dazzling and rich array of marine life.

As the National Park Service turns 100 years old this year, we Americans will celebrate the serene beauty of our natural places and marvel at the wildlife that is free to roam free from harm. Our national park system is the envy of the world. It is famously known as “America's best idea.”

Today's “best idea” is to extend that same permanent protection to our ocean treasures, creating our nation's “blue parks.” The U.S. controls the largest expanse of ocean of any country in the world. As a result, we Americans have a tremendous opportunity—and responsibility—to be a global leader in protecting our oceans. There are currently no ocean areas along the Eastern Seaboard that are fully protected as a marine national monument. (There are four such monuments in the U.S. Central Pacific.) Creating the first Atlantic Marine National Monument would stand as an historic and important demonstration of global environmental leadership.

The New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area is an outstanding ocean treasure. Scientists associated with New England's most respected aquariums recently released an in-depth analysis of decades of data demonstrating that this area is a biodiversity hotspot, home to 73 different species of deep sea corals, an array and abundance of dolphin and whale species, as well as seabirds and sea turtles, and important fish habitat that helps support regional fisheries. NOAA-led expeditions have found unique and rare life forms in the area. While the area is largely untouched and wild today, it is highly vulnerable to disturbance and should be protected now from the push to fish, drill, and mine in ever deeper and more remote places. As climate change and ocean acidification continue to affect ocean life, it also becomes more and more urgent to establish blue parks in important and relatively pristine ocean habitats such as this one.

The shelf-break and canyon head portions of the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area specifically should be included in the monument because of their importance to marine mammals, fish species, and benthic diversity. Similarly, the monument should protect the full water column because of its high abundance and diversity of marine mammals, as well as of sea turtles and seabirds, and to preserve the ecological integrity of the area.

A healthy ocean is the basis for thriving recreational and commercial activities that drive coastal economies; it also provides many ecosystem services that protect our planet. The New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area is a striking example of what a healthy ocean provides. If fully protected, the area will continue to contribute to the health of New England's ocean and to the coastal communities and businesses that depend on it for generations to come. That is why so many organizations, businesses, scientists, educators and ordinary citizens in the region have written in support of the permanent protection of the area and its designation as the first Atlantic marine national monument.

Over 160,000 comments have been submitted in support of permanently protecting this area. These expressions of support include letters from the Connecticut Congressional Delegation, New England state legislators, over 100 businesses, 145 scientists, dozens of national and regional ocean and wildlife conservation organizations, commercial and recreational fishermen,

religious leaders, and tribes. Support also comes from the region's leading aquariums, which seek to provide venues for the public to learn about these natural wonders, and to inspire a new generation of ocean stewards, scientists and admirers.

In conclusion, the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area is a unique biodiversity hotspot and a place of incalculable beauty and scientific interest. We enthusiastically support its designation as the first blue Marine National Monument in the Atlantic.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Aquarium of the Pacific
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Audubon Society of Rhode Island
Blue Frontier
Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
Center for American Progress
Civic Enterprises
Conservation Law Foundation
Earthjustice
Environment America
Environment Council of Rhode Island
Greenpeace
League of Conservation Voters
Marine Conservation Institute
Monterey Bay Aquarium
Moody Gardens Galveston Island
Mystic Aquarium
National Audubon Society
National Aquarium
National Geographic Pristine Seas
National Wildlife Federation
National Ocean Protection Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
New England Aquarium
Northwest Trek Wildlife Park

Ocean Champions
Ocean Conservancy
Oceana
Pew Charitable Trusts
Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium
Save the Bay
Save the Sound
Sea Life Carlsbad
Sea Life Charlotte
Sea Life Grapevine/Dallas
Sea Life Kansas
Sea Life Minnesota
Sea Life Orlando
Sea Life Trust
Shedd Aquarium
Surfrider Foundation
Sylvia Earle
Tennessee Aquarium
Texas State Aquarium
The Ocean Project
Waitt Foundation
Waitt Institute
Wildcoast
World Wildlife Fund

CC:

Brian Deese, Senior Advisor to the President
The Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State
The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
The Honorable Penny Pritzker, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

(Continued)

Christina Goldfuss, Managing Director, Council on Environmental Quality
Whitley Saumweber, Associate Director, Oceans and Coasts, Council on Environmental Quality
Sally Yozell, Senior Advisor, U.S. State Department

Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Ed Markey
Senator Chris Murphy
Senator Jack Reed
Senator Elizabeth Warren
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse

Representative Michael E. Capuano
Representative Katherine Clark
Representative David Cicilline
Representative Joseph Courtney
Representative Rosa L. DeLauro
Representative Elizabeth Esty
Representative Jim Hines
Representative Bill Keating
Representative Joseph Kennedy
Representative James R. Langevin
Representative John B. Larson
Representative Stephen F. Lynch
Representative James P. McGovern
Representative Seth Moulton
Representative Richard E. Neal
Representative Niki Tsongas