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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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Secretary Ryan Zinke
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

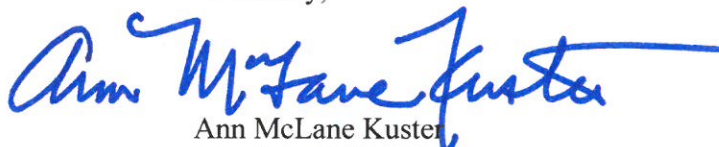
I am writing in response to the Department of Interior's current review of designated National Monuments, and to express my firm support for protecting these important and historic landmarks. Of particular interest to New England states is the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, which was designated on September 15, 2016 as the first and only national monument in the Atlantic Ocean. This monument is of critical importance to marine biodiversity and serves as a biological hotspot, and I request that no modifications to its boundaries or uses are enacted as a result of the Department's review.

Located just 130 miles off the coast of Cape Cod, this monument encompasses some of the world's oldest underwater canyons, deep sea corals and sensitive habitats for countless aquatic species. Actions taken to permanently protect this critical ecosystem will allow rare marine species to flourish and future generations of scientists to understand how a changing ocean impacts our climate. These canyons and seamounts have been the source of extensive scientific interest and research since the 1970s, and recent studies have discovered several rare aquatic species that are not known to exist anywhere else on Earth. The preservation of this highly sensitive ecological habitat will enhance researchers' ability to study unique deep sea ecology and the dynamic ecosystem that is contained within the monument.

The Northeast Canyons and Seamount Marine National Monument is worthy of permanent protection because the geographic boundaries were narrowly drawn based on the best available science, and incorporated extensive public and stakeholder input. While this monument was being proposed, thousands of concerned citizens, businesses, and members of our science and fishing communities wrote in support of the monument's designation and the importance of protecting this ocean ecosystem for future generations. In response to comments issued by regional commercial fishing groups, the Obama Administration granted a 7-year grace period during which lobster and crab fisherman will be able to operate within the boundaries, and protected the right to recreationally fish. This monument brought together a wide spectrum of stakeholders who understood the importance of protecting this land while ensuring that the economic livelihood of New England's commercial fishing industry wasn't jeopardized.

The United States continues to experience the impacts of a changing ocean, and it is imperative that we remain committed to protecting sensitive aquatic ecosystems. As you continue your review of federally designated national monuments, I request that you maintain the existing geographic boundaries of the Northeast Canyon and Seamounts Marine National Monument as designated by President Obama, and not alter the permitted uses within the monument.

Sincerely,



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress