



**MYSTIC
AQUARIUM**



**New England
Aquarium**

Protecting the blue planet

July 7, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross Jr.
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Zinke and Secretary Ross,

On behalf of Mystic Aquarium and New England Aquarium, we are writing to express our continued support for upholding existing protections for our nation's Marine National Monuments and specifically the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument. We showcase these special underwater places in our institutions, and we see first-hand the pride they inspire in our visitors. It is very important to us to have these iconic places conserved on behalf of all Americans, and we benefit from being able to point to wild areas in our backyard that symbolize the strength of U.S. stewardship of our natural resources.

As institutions that were deeply engaged with the designation process, we can attest to the extensive stakeholder process that preceded the proclamation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument. Mystic Aquarium and New England Aquarium are science-based institutions and trusted community resources that make significant contributions to the field of marine research. We applaud the decades of work conducted by our senior scientists, Dr. Peter Auster and Dr. Scott Krauss. Together Drs. Auster and Krauss conducted a wide-ranging scientific analysis of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts region. That analysis revealed that the area represents the best remaining examples of undisturbed ecosystems in the North Atlantic, making them vital to scientific research. Whales, dolphins, sea turtles and seabirds thrive in the region. New species continue to be discovered in the depths of the canyons and seamounts, and discoveries about these deep-sea ecosystems are yielding important insights into how this unique part of the ocean functions.

The ocean covers over 70 percent of the planet and generates many billions of dollars in food production, tourism, recreation, and other uses. Yet only 3.5 percent of the global ocean is permanently set aside to help regenerate the resources upon which these activities depend. Our Marine National Monuments not

¹ National Marine Fisheries Service (2017) Annual Commercial Landings Statistics. Accessed on 4/3/17, available at: <https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/commercial-fisheries/commercial-landings/annual-landings/index>.

² National Marine Fisheries Service (2015) Fisheries of the United States, 2014. U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA Current Fishery Statistics No.2014. Available at: <https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/commercial-fisheries/fus/fus14/index>.

only support compatible uses like recreational fishing and diving operations, they also help grow our U.S. fishery resources by providing havens for fish populations to spawn and reproduce. These Monuments complement the nation's robust fishery management regime, under which the economic value of U.S. commercial fishing landings has been steadily rising¹, and the number of fisheries-related U.S. jobs rose 15 percent between 2011 and 2014.²

Given the remoteness of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument and a desire to share this special place with the public, Mystic Aquarium will open a new photographic gallery exhibit on August 2, 2017. The exhibit will immerse its 750,000 guests annually in this New England ocean treasure, the first of its kind in the U.S North Atlantic.

Marine Monuments are lasting commitments to future generations and inspiring symbols of our national heritage. They represent a small investment that yields positive dividends for the environment and the economy, which benefit all Americans. We urge you to keep these Monuments in place and retain their strong protections. For our part, we are committed to communicating the importance of U.S. ocean leadership in the conservation of marine life to our members and to the millions of American and international guests who visit us each year.

Sincerely,



Stephen M. Coan, PhD
President and CEO
Mystic Aquarium



Maliz E. Beams
Interim President & CEO
New England Aquarium