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**Congress of the United States**  
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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
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HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, LABOR, AND PENSIONS  
[www.shea-porter.house.gov](http://www.shea-porter.house.gov)

July 10, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Zinke:

I would like to share my comments regarding your current review of our National Monuments. I cannot stress enough their importance to our identity as a nation and the critical nature of these national treasures.

A National Monument of particular significance to my district is the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument (NCSM). Scientists have identified the NCSM as a unique biodiversity hot spot – home to ancient deep-sea coral communities that thrive in the canyons and on the seamounts, and to endangered whales, sea turtles, fish and seabirds. Preserving this Monument's current boundaries will protect this delicate ecosystem, where scientists conduct underwater research and regularly discover new and unusual species in their expeditions to this unique ecosystem.

The NCSM meets the requirements of the Antiquities Act. The Act requires that Monuments cover the smallest area compatible with protecting the Monument's highly significant ecological and geologic features that are objects of scientific interest. The Monument area has been an important study site for researchers, including those from academic institutions and aquariums in the region. In recent years, research expeditions to this spectacular undersea world have yielded not only new and rare species, but also new understandings about deep-sea ecology, and they have fostered growing appreciation of the unique nature of the area. This ocean oasis serves as a reference site for scientists working to understand the rapid changes taking place across the spectrum of habitats represented in the NCSM.

An extensive year-long public and stakeholder consultation process occurred prior to setting the boundaries of the NCSM. The Department of Commerce held a "town hall" meeting in New England and then invited written public comments for a year. Elected officials were consulted extensively. Officials met numerous times with stakeholder groups – fishing industry representatives, conservation groups, and other local stakeholders – in New England and in Washington, DC. Fishing industry representatives were engaged in the process for more than a year before the Monument was designated. The administration listened to and acted upon their concerns by reducing the size of the proposed monument area, providing a seven-year grace period for local lobster and crab fishermen, and allowing for continued recreational fishing in the Monument.

Our oceans are changing at an unprecedented rate, and we must protect unique and vulnerable areas if we are to continue to rely on the sea's bounty and beauty. Keeping this Monument intact is not only critical to preserving a unique ecosystem now, but also to ensuring that it endures for future research and public use. I support the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument as it was designated on September 15, 2016 and respectfully request that you do not modify its boundaries or uses, or otherwise diminish its value to our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carol Shea-Porter".

Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress