



STATE OF MAINE
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04333-0001

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

August 28, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I have just learned that your Administration is actively exploring designating areas within the Gulf of Maine as a National Marine Monument under the Antiquities Act. I would first like to express my opposition to this proposal and second would like to request more information from your Administration regarding the public procedure you expect to follow as well as information regarding the timing of this decision.

I understand that Congress has given the President broad powers under the Antiquities Act to designate federal land a National Monument. Fundamentally, I oppose this power because it is so sweeping and provides few procedural protections to those who are likely to be most affected. The National Monument process is considered a "black box," with the President deciding from whom to solicit input (possibly without consulting anyone at all) and no set timeframes for deliberation by the Administration.

In addition to my general objections to this power, I am also opposed to the specific project in question that looks to designate Cashes Ledge and undersea canyons and seamounts in the Gulf of Maine as a National Monument. These National Marine Monuments serve only one purpose – excluding commercial fishing activity from certain segments of the ocean. This proposal will affect Maine fishermen from a number of fishing sectors, including offshore lobstermen, tuna fishermen, herring fishermen and groundfish fishermen. Maine's economy is heavily dependent on natural resource-based industries and these types of designations harm these working Mainers the most.

Aside from the economic disruption this proposal would cause, I have serious procedural concerns as they relate to other planning activities taking place concerning the Gulf of Maine. As you may be aware, the New England Fishery Management Council just recently completed what was a roughly ten-year process to adopt a habitat amendment. This amendment balances economic and environmental interests as they relate to Cashes Ledge and other areas. Unfortunately, environmental interest groups who are not happy with the outcome of this process are now attempting an end-run by seeking a National Monument designation for these same areas. It is my understanding that no one interest got exactly what it wanted out of the habitat amendment, but that is part of the process of government most times. It is too bad we are now



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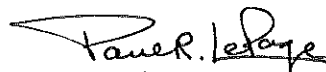
saddled with the sour grapes of the environmental lobby, who seek to up end the habitat amendment with a National Monument designation.

In addition to this being an end-run around the New England Council process, the timing of this matter is somewhat puzzling. You have issued an Executive Order regarding regional ocean planning in order to improve stakeholder engagement in decision-making around ocean uses, and to foster interagency coordination across various levels of government. This process is ongoing and representatives from Maine State government have been closely involved in this process. Now, the public is put on notice that you are considering designating a National Monument in the Gulf of Maine before this effort is complete – I have to question why we are engaged in this ocean planning exercise at all.

I appreciate you have broad powers vis a vis designating National Monuments. I am hoping, however, that you will share with me your Administration's plan for considering areas of the Gulf of Maine for National Monument status. Will there be any public meetings to discuss this proposal or will there be other mechanisms for those affected by this proposal to provide your Administration with their comments and concerns? I understand you are working closely with environmental interest groups. I hope you will also be open to hearing from working people who make their living from the Gulf of Maine. I am also curious as to the decision-making timeline – when do you expect to make a decision regarding this potential designation?

Thank you for your attention to my concerns and thank you for any insight you care to share regarding this process.

Sincerely,


Paul R. LePage
Governor

cc: Senator Susan M. Collins
Senator Angus S. King
Congressman Bruce L. Poliquin
Congresswoman Rochelle M. Pingree