

March 13, 2017



To: Rob Bishop, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee

Subj: Marine National Monuments

The North Carolina Fisheries Association certainly appreciates the ability of significant natural, cultural, or scientific features to receive federal protections as appropriate. Staples of coastal commerce, fishing and seafood production are also core cultural elements of coastal and national heritage, going back over five generations for many families. Commercial fishermen established our association in 1952 to serve fishing families by protecting their heritage and promoting seafood. To achieve this, the association actively engages the scientific and management processes on behalf of the industry and supports many outreach and education projects. Over six decades later, we still believe the commercial fishing industry begins and ends with families – from those who harvest seafood to those who enjoy it. We are committed to presenting an accurate portrait of the industry and the people who sustain it.

Although we are a commercial fisheries trade organization that advocates for sustainable access for our fishermen to their traditional fishing grounds, we advocate for this access by all who wish to ply our state and national waters, whether it be for commerce, sustenance or recreation. Efforts to expand Marine National Monuments substantially impact our access to traditional fishing grounds that are presently and sustainably managed through multiple councils, commissions, and agencies. Through these Council processes, which include extensive collaboration with multiple industries and entities, Fisheries Management Plans are developed to ensure our shared resources are sustained for future generations. Furthermore, they are managed utilizing the best available science conducted by some of the world's leading experts in their field. These efforts may not always yield the results desired by each group, but it is the most comprehensive process in considering every aspect of sustainably managing these resources.

It is unfortunate however, that the powers used to enact federal protections can overwrite existing efforts, displacing other culturally and economically significant features and activities. Additionally, it disregards H.R 1335, which delineates the Magnuson-Stevens Act as the controlling statute for our marine resources. This is the case of the Marine National Monument nominations of recent, as the process is ultimately and simply, an executive decision.

Unlike protecting important shipwrecks and other historical features, the recent nominations have included hundreds of thousands of square miles of productive marine waters that are already actively managed through a deliberative and scientific decision-making processes to ensure sustainability. The expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea monument in Hawaii has already given much concern to the people that have fished the Hawaiian waters for multiple generations, yet had no voice in the process that now prohibits their sustainable fishing activities. The proposed monument in California has also left

fishermen in the dark during discussions and planning, prompting the Pacific Marine Fisheries Management Council to pen a letter to then President Obama. In this letter, they stressed the importance of using a transparent process, taking into consideration the social and economic impacts, and the fact that their waters, as well as all U.S. waters are sustainably managed through these council processes as mandated by federal law. Now New England has now been the subject of the same process, or lack of. The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, designated last September, has left stakeholders no other choice than to sue for relief. While these designations immediately impact fishermen, they also impact the economies of those areas reliant on them.

Although this mechanism is executive, early efforts heavily involved the public, and have been used prudently and sparingly. Unfortunately, the previous administration took full advantage of this power, relying very little on the public to gauge the impacts, and disregarded advice provided by the Fishery Management Councils in each region. The administration supported multiple efforts to identify these large areas of traditional fishing grounds that are now illegal for fishermen to fish.

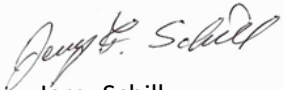
While it is to be expected that fishermen will from time to time reduce their efforts to maintain sustainability, they never expected that they would be closed out of a traditional industry for no reason at all. The marine resources in our great country including, those areas mentioned previously, are already managed, and managed heavily. There is no basis to close them out, nor to do so with so little sensitivity as to the impact of those that will surely be affected.

It is important to consider is the progress made by The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. In October 2015, the Council successfully mediated a multi-stakeholder Magnuson-Stevens Act coral habitat protection amendment which resulted in the protection of approximately 38,000 square miles of coral habitat in 13 deep water canyons in the region. This considerate approach included input from fishermen, scientists, conservationists, and regulators to discuss the goals of the amendment, and how they could be achieved with as little negative impact as possible. Unfortunately, this agreed upon action is now the target of formal Sanctuary nomination and status by other Non-Governmental Organizations to completely eliminate fishermen's access.

The Antiquities Act does not take into consideration scientific or economic analyses, or existing social and cultural impacts. It is simply the stroke of a pen that initiates this information void process, which is commonly based on pressure from well-funded environmental groups that are aware that consideration of these impacts are not necessary. Unfortunately, the public, including the fishing community, is directly affected, and has no voice.

The intent of the Antiquities Act may be pure, but without the advice of leading experts researching these waters, without weighing the impacts of the fishing industry who has vast experience to offer and will ultimately suffer the impacts, and without the proven process to combine all aspects into an effective, yet sensitive tool, efforts will be misguided and afford insufficient protections while pointlessly destroying an industry

We strongly encourage you to adopt the approach employed by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and further outlined by the example set by the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council.



Jerry Schill

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