

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 31, 2013

Matt Brookhart
Chief, Policy & Planning Division
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Mr. Brookhart:

We write to express our strong support for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) proposed rule (Docket NOAA-NOS-2013-0091), which signifies the first step in re-establishing and revamping the nomination process for potential new national marine sanctuaries.

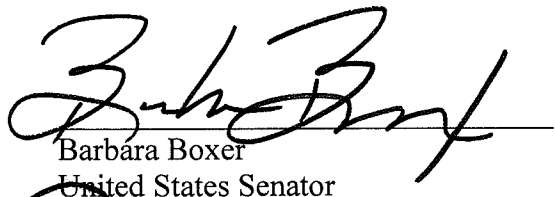
Since 1972, thirteen ocean and Great Lakes areas of natural and cultural significance have been designated as national marine sanctuaries. In addition to safeguarding these underwater treasures, sanctuaries provide numerous socioeconomic benefits for local communities. From recreation opportunities, to marine research, to tourism, coastal job growth and economic development depend on the healthy, attractive seascapes conserved and promoted by national marine sanctuaries. Communities around the nation have recognized the benefits of sanctuaries and have expressed strong interest in establishing sanctuaries in their own coastal waters. However, since 1995, formal requests to NOAA to consider new sites have not been possible. The proposed rule would remedy this problem.

We are pleased that NOAA has sought public input on its sanctuary nomination and designation criteria, and that the revamped process will strengthen the ability of communities and other interested parties to actively participate. Public involvement is a hallmark of the National Marine Sanctuary System, and we support NOAA's clear intention of engaging with local communities as a key component of the nomination process.

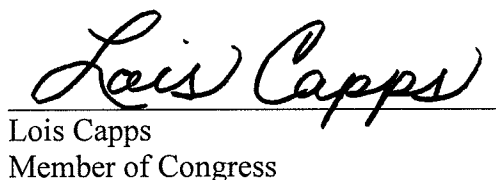
The proposed rule is a strong step toward re-opening a public process for sanctuary site nomination. By amending the process by which potential sanctuary sites are nominated, the proposed rule does not in any way affect regulations on existing sanctuaries, nor does it create any new regulations. It also does not require any additional federal spending. As such, the proposed rule is supported by diverse constituencies and offers a good example of practical rulemaking that will benefit communities across the nation.

In sum, we strongly support NOAA's proposed rule that would reopen the site nomination process for national marine sanctuaries and establish a highly public nomination and designation process for potential new sanctuaries. We recognize the great benefits that existing sanctuaries provide and support NOAA's efforts to build on these benefits.

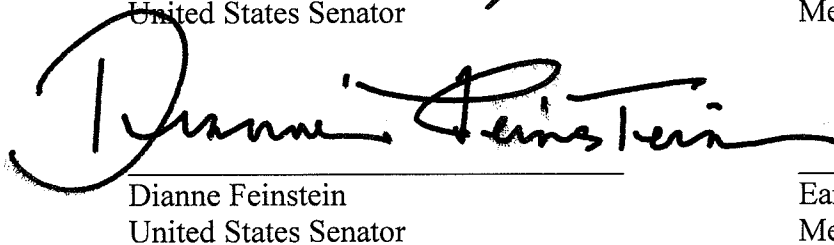
Sincerely,



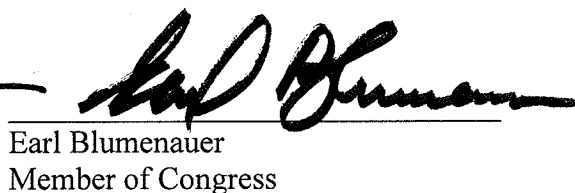
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



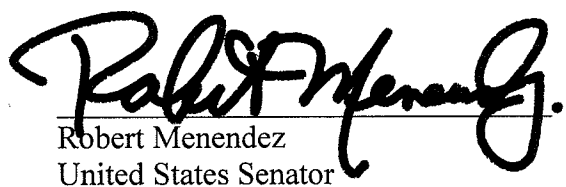
Lois Capps
Member of Congress



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



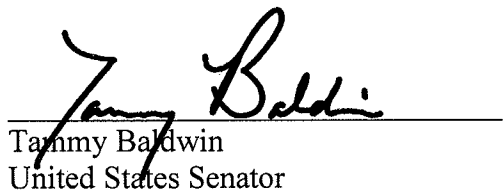
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



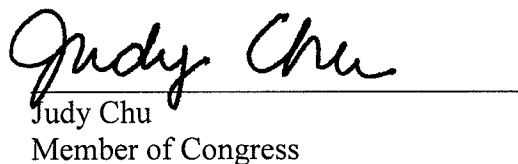
Robert Menendez
United States Senator



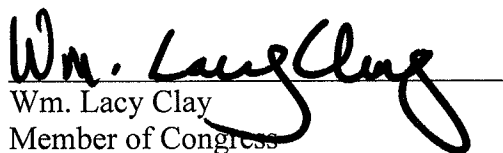
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



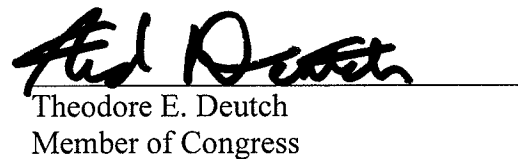
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



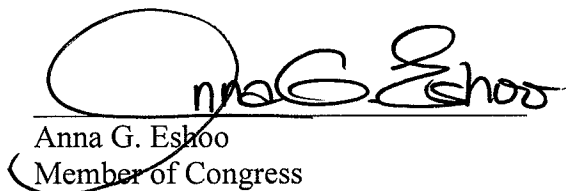
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



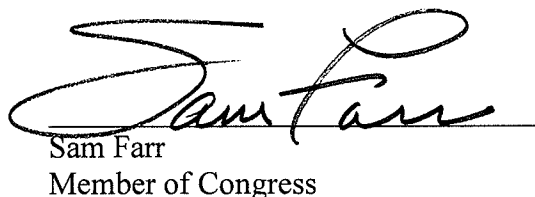
Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



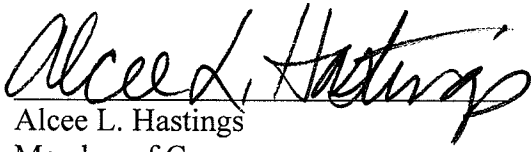
Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress



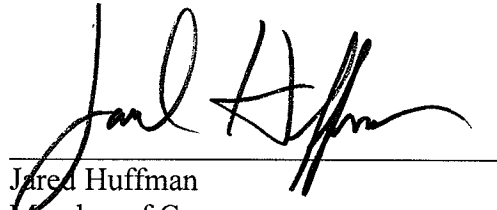
Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



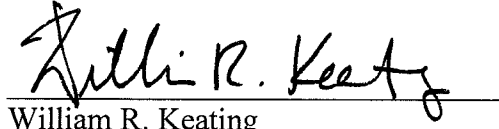
Sam Farr
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



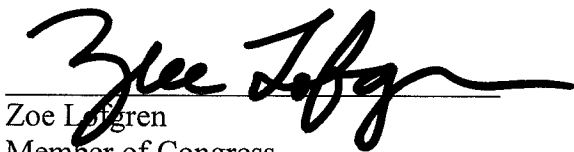
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



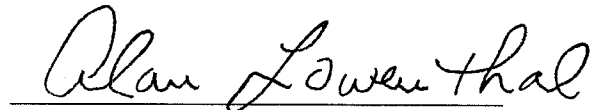
William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Alan S. Lowenthal
Member of Congress



James P. Moran
Member of Congress



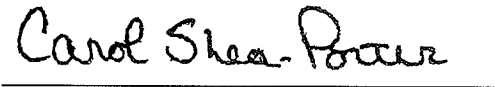
Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



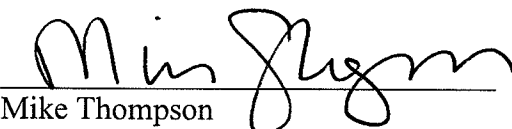
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress