

Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

January 11, 2017

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20240

The Honorable Kathryn Sullivan
Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Madam Secretary Jewell and Under Secretary Sullivan:

In March 2015, your Departments charged the Marine Protected Area Federal Advisory Committee (MPA FAC) with making recommendations on how marine protected areas (MPAs) can continue to support key programs (management, education, outreach, and monitoring) with limited and often shrinking budgets, and how to incorporate knowledge about ecological spatial connectivity and climate change into MPA network design and management. With this letter, the Committee shares its report on options for expanding available funding for MPA programs from external sources. The Committee's recommendations on ecological connectivity will be sent separately.

We are pleased to submit to you our final report, *Protecting Our Marine Treasures – Sustainable Finance Options for U.S. Marine Protected Areas*. Our report is intended to help guide MPA managers on the general approaches they may pursue to obtain external funding. We describe eight elements of success for those seeking funding. We identify four “funding vehicles” describing how funding can be processed, as well as common sources of external funding, including donations, philanthropy, public-private partnerships, crowdsourcing and revenues from concessions, permits, and visitor fees. We noted both opportunities and constraints and have included real world case studies. The document provides findings based on the work done to date and notes the need for ongoing work to fully explore all external funding possibilities.

In addition to the guidance our report provides, it also contains three sets of recommendations focused at the national level, NOAA and DOI's National Marine Protected Areas Center, and for individual MPA programs throughout the nation. Particularly important for your agencies are the following:

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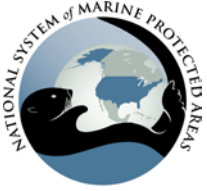
Margaret Williams
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Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

- Enact a National Ocean Trust Fund to support ocean protection and management, and specifically implementation and management of MPAs.
- Develop and enact legislation (or administrative processes) to allow government entities greater flexibility to solicit and receive funding from external sources to support MPAs.
- Build upon the lessons learned by the Department of Interior's century-long support of National Parks to identify and implement new funding mechanisms for MPAs.
- Develop new funding partnerships with private sector interests who benefit from MPAs (such as travel, tourism, automotive, insurance industries), or with other industries that identify with, and are willing to support, marine protection and stewardship.
- Develop an external funding and partnership assistance capability within the National MPA Center, and, through the Center, share this information and best practices.

Our nation's MPAs help protect and sustain our marine resources, now and into the future. However, without sustainable sources of funding, vital MPA management functions will be reduced or terminated. We hope this report is useful for those seeking support for these mission critical operations. Further, we hope the Department of Commerce and Department of the Interior (and all stakeholders) will closely consider the recommendations in this report, which we believe are important, reasonable, and feasible.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our report. We look forward to your timely response and we stand ready to work with you on next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Geiger".

George J. Geiger
Chair, Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

cc: Dr. Christine Blackburn, Acting Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management, NOAA
Dr. W. Russell Callender, Assistant Administrator for National Ocean Service, NOAA
John Armor, Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, NOAA
Jonathan B. Jarvis, Director, National Park Service
Dr. Daniel M. Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Lauren Wenzel, Designated Federal Official, MPA FAC, NOAA