



Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

June 16, 2014

The Honorable Penny Pritzker
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

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

Dear Madam Secretary Pritzker and Madam Secretary Jewell:

On behalf of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (MPA FAC), I am pleased to provide the enclosed recommendations on two issues central to the successful use of marine protected areas as a tool for conserving special ocean places and fostering healthy coastal communities – managing recreational uses at MPAs, and broadening stakeholder engagement.

The MPA FAC was established under Executive Order 13158, representing diverse sectors and interests in the nation's oceans community. In 2011, the Department of Commerce (DOC) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) issued an important and timely charge to our Committee: find ways to more effectively engage the American people, especially recreational visitors who use, enjoy and support the nation's marine protected areas. A common thread in our recommendations is the great and largely untapped potential of the nation's diverse marine protected areas programs to galvanize public support and engage visitors to help conserve and restore our troubled oceans and sustain the local communities that depend on them.

Our recommendations state that marine protected areas often lack the necessary recognition, understanding and support among stakeholder groups to be fully successful. We call on DOC and DOI, through the National Marine Protected Areas Center (MPA Center), to strengthen and expand communications and connections to key stakeholders using contemporary media. We also suggest specific actions for ensuring that recreational activities are managed to sustain the integrity of natural and cultural resources in marine protected areas.

Moreover, we find that the MPA Center, a collaborative effort of DOC and DOI, can play a larger role in linking the nation's diverse marine protected area programs and sharing best practices among them, and we encourage both DOC and DOI programs to

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work with the Center to fulfill this shared vision. A promising example of such collaboration took place at the MPA FAC's joint session earlier this month with the 14 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Councils to develop the attached "Call to Action." This progressive statement calls on ocean managers and users to promote and sustain the tremendous recreational values of marine protected areas for travel and tourism, while minimizing the attendant risks to our most treasured special places. It was adopted by the MPA FAC on June 4, 2014, and will be presented to each of the 13 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Councils and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council for their formal approval during Summer 2014. We anticipate that this "Call to Action" will then be released widely from these complementary bodies dedicated to the effective management of America's marine protected areas.

We hope that you, as the nation's chief stewards for these special ocean places, find these recommendations useful, and we look forward to hearing about how they can be implemented within your diverse marine protected area programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Geiger". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

George Geiger
Chair, Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

- cc. Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere (DOC)
Dr. Mark Schaefer, Deputy Under Secretary for Conservation and Management (DOC)
Lauren Wenzel, MPA FAC Designated Federal Official, National Marine Protected Areas Center (DOC/NOAA)
Dr. Holly Bamford, Assistant Administrator for Oceans and Coasts (DOC)
Dan Basta, Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (DOC)