Dear Under Secretary Lubchenco and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sobeck:

We understand that the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan will soon be released publicly, and wanted to reiterate our support for this plan, particularly the elements related to the charge of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (MPA FAC) in implementing Executive Order 13158 to strengthen and advance the nation’s system of marine protected areas. We also commend the Departments of Commerce and the Interior for your recent actions to strengthen protection for marine habitats.

In September 2011, the MPA FAC transmitted recommendations that address linkages between marine protected areas and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP). These recommendations were developed in response to the charge provided to the Committee by the Departments of Commerce and the Interior. We request that these recommendations be considered as the National Ocean Policy is implemented (http://www.mpa.gov/pdf/helpful-resources/mpa_fac_recommendations_sep2011.pdf).

In particular, we want to note the actions related to marine protected areas in the Implementation Plan. As stated in our previous recommendations, we support the reactivation of the Sanctuary Site Evaluation List (SEL) as one important mechanism to identify and evaluate candidate marine protected area sites. We support mechanisms that provide opportunities for communities to work collaboratively with agencies and
help ensure public engagement in a rigorous analysis of new marine protected area alternatives.

We look forward to continuing our work with the Department of Commerce and the Department of the Interior to support the National Ocean Policy.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

George Geiger
Chair

cc. Lauren Wenzel, Acting Director, National Marine Protected Areas Center, NOAA