



Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

November 15, 2018

Secretary Wilbur Ross
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Secretary Ryan Zinke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Ross and Secretary Zinke:

The Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (MPAFAC) provides balanced, actionable advice to the Department of Commerce (DOC) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) on emerging management and policy issues facing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Your Departments oversee some of the nation's most treasured and iconic MPAs, including a network of National Marine Sanctuaries, Parks, Wildlife Refuges, Monuments, and Estuarine Research Reserves. Created in 2003, the MPAFAC was re-authorized by the President on September 29, 2017.

Last January, you directed the MPAFAC to advise the Departments regarding:

- Sustaining Ecosystem, Economic and Cultural Benefits Provided by MPAs in a Changing Ocean.
- Enhancing Management of Cultural Heritage Resources and Values in MPAs.

As Committee Chair, I am pleased to deliver to you the MPAFAC's findings and recommendations (adopted unanimously on Nov. 8, 2018) which recognize and seek to maintain the substantial ecological and economic importance of these national treasures.

SUSTAINING MPA BENEFITS

Five Priority Actions: The MPAFAC found that MPAs provide benefits to the ecosystems they protect and to the coastal communities that use and value them. The Committee also identified a suite of challenges that threaten the nation's MPAs and the benefits they provide. There was broad agreement that we can and must take immediate steps to meet those challenges. Listed below are five priority actions recommended by the MPAFAC and explained more fully in the accompanying Executive Summary and the full Report.

1. **Support the Nation's MPAs.** Fully support, fund, maintain, evaluate, and adaptively manage the nation's MPAs in U.S. coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes waters. Ensure that any proposed alterations to an MPA's size, location, purpose, protection or designation are based on clearly articulated objectives, a rigorous evaluation of effectiveness using best available science, and a transparent and inclusive public planning process.

CHAIR

Brian Baird
Advisor, Ocean & Coastal Policy
Novato, CA,

VICE CHAIR

Katy Bell, Ph.D.
National Geographic

MEMBERS

John Anderson
Nossaman LLP

John Ballotti
Los Angeles Rod and Reel Club

Alex Brylske, Ph.D.
Florida Keys Community College

Mark Carr, Ph.D.
University of California,
Santa Cruz

Martha Honey, Ph.D.
Center for Responsible Travel

Christopher Horton
Congressional Sportsmen's
Foundation

Jacque Hostler-Carmesin
Trinidad Rancheria

Stephanie Madsen
At Sea Processors Association

William McClintock, Ph.D.
Marine Science Institute, UCSB

Lynn McClure
National Parks Conservation
Association

Samantha Murray
Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Ryan Orgera, Ph.D.
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation
Foundation

David Robinson
David S. Robinson and Associates

Peter Stauffer
Surfrider Foundation

Trisha Kehaulani Watson
Honua Consulting

DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICER

Charles Wahle, Ph.D.
National Marine Protected Areas
Center
Charles.Wahle@noaa.gov

National MPA Center
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3281
(240) 533-0652
lauren.wenzel@noaa.gov

www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov

2. **Ensure Emerging Ocean Uses Are Compatible.** Evaluate emerging ocean uses, and ensure that those occurring in MPAs are consistent with the sites' purposes, compatible with other valued human uses of the protected areas, and effectively managed to be ecologically sustainable over time.
3. **Support Innovative Approaches for Compliance.** Support and employ innovative approaches to outreach, monitoring, and enforcement, and use emerging technologies to more effectively enforce U.S. MPA regulations and encourage compliance by MPA users.
4. **Support and Fund Local Community Engagement.** Support and fund MPA programs to proactively engage local communities around the U.S. in the design of new MPAs where needed, and the adaptive management of existing MPAs where changing conditions require new site management approaches for achieving their goals.
5. **Assess and Address Impacts of Climate Change and Emerging Ocean Uses.** Explore, characterize, monitor, study, and evaluate U.S. MPAs to detect and assess impacts of climate change and emerging ocean uses on the natural and cultural resources and ecosystem services of the sites, and employ the results to advance their long-term resilience and adaptive management to achieve their statutory goals.

Significant and Far-Reaching Benefits: The MPAFAC identified significant and far-reaching benefits from U.S. MPAs. Collectively, these diverse special places support healthy, productive, and resilient ecosystems; support coastal communities and economies; and connect America's people to their ocean heritage.

Emerging Uses and Challenges: The MPAFAC identified emerging uses and challenges facing MPAs and made recommendations for sustaining MPA benefits in the face of those pressures. Chief among these are growing ocean tourism and recreational uses; impacts and user conflicts stemming from expanding industrial and commercial activities; emerging ecosystem impacts of climate change on MPA ecosystems, uses and values; and emerging national policy directions that may weaken, reduce or eliminate MPAs, particularly those managed by federal agencies.

Enhancing Resilience of Coastal Marine Ecosystems and their Services: As part of its work on MPA benefits, the MPAFAC produced a detailed review of the ecological benefits of, and the most important design features for, ecologically resilient MPAs. Well designed and managed MPAs can play an important role in enhancing the resilience of ecosystems to the impacts of changing global ocean (e.g. by sustaining marine life and buffering coastal communities from storm impacts).

ENHANCING MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES IN MPAS

The MPAFAC also produced an update to its online Cultural Heritage Toolkit, originally developed in 2013. It provides background and tools on cultural resource conservation for MPA managers. These pages are designed to be used in an interactive web format. The Committee recommends that this updated toolkit be posted online to replace an earlier version, and that DOC and DOI conduct outreach to share this resource with managers in the U.S. and internationally.

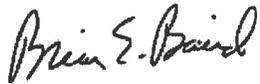
MOVING FORWARD

Appointed by your agencies, MPAFAC members represent diverse ocean interests and sectors, including ocean industry, commercial and recreational fishing, tourism and recreation, state resource management, natural and social science, conservation, and tribal and indigenous cultures and maritime heritage. The committee's diversity ensures a well-informed and balanced perspective in the MPAFAC's deliberations and consensus recommendations.

By advancing the actions recommended by the MPAFAC, and by supporting their adoption by state, local and tribal counterparts throughout the U.S., the Departments of Commerce and Interior can ensure that these treasured ocean places continue to provide benefits to America for generations to come.

We would be happy to discuss these recommendations with you or your staff at any time. Thank you for your continued support of our nation's MPAs and the world class resources that they protect.

Sincerely,



Brian E. Baird
Chair
Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

cc:

RDML Timothy Gallaudet, Acting Administrator, NOAA

MPAFAC members

Lauren Wenzel, Director, NOAA MPA Center

Charles Wahle, Ph.D., MPAFAC Designated Federal Officer

Attachments:

- Sustaining MPA Benefits in a Changing Ocean: Executive Summary (November 2018)
- Sustaining MPA Benefits in a Changing Ocean: Findings and Recommendations (November 2018)
- How MPAs Enhance the Resilience of Coastal Marine Ecosystems and their Services: A Supplemental Report by the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (November 2018)
- Updates to the Cultural Resources Toolkit (November 2018)