



Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

September 14, 2017

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

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

Subject: Managing for the Future in America's Marine Protected Areas

Dear Secretary Ross and Secretary Zinke:

I write on behalf of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (MPA FAC), a diverse group of ocean stakeholders that advises the Department of Commerce and the Department of the Interior on ways to improve the effectiveness and value of our nation's marine protected areas (MPAs). These valued ocean places include national marine sanctuaries, national parks, national wildlife refuges and marine national monuments, all of which are managed by your Departments. Equally important are the hundreds of MPAs along our ocean and Great Lakes' shores, created and managed by coastal states and territories, often in partnership with the federal government.

America's diverse MPAs face shared challenges arising from rapidly changing ocean conditions and expanding human uses. Unaddressed, these and other pressures threaten to undermine the economic, societal, and ecological benefits we all derive from America's oceans. Tackled proactively by MPA agencies working with advice from experts and input from the American public, these challenges can be transformed into opportunities for engaging our citizens in securing our common ocean legacy.

In 2017, your Departments asked the MPA FAC to recommend actions on three important aspects of our evolving connections to the ocean. Summarized below, the MPA FAC's recommendations on these topics are provided in the three attached documents.

1. **Making MPAs Relevant to a Diverse Public** – outlining ways to engage a wider diversity of communities in understanding, enjoyment, and stewardship of these critical ocean places.

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2. **Citizen Science Informing MPA Management** – highlighting the value of community-based science that informs effective and long-term management and stewardship of MPAs.
3. **Adapting MPAs to a Changing Ocean** – emphasizing the importance of continually adapting our management approaches of MPAs to more efficiently and effectively address changing environments and ocean uses.

The United States has made a substantial investment in our world-class system of MPA programs. These areas support coastal recreation, tourism, and fisheries and are frequently used to promote coastal businesses, resorts, and real estate. MPAs make a significant contribution to our local, state and national economies -- all while protecting some of our most valuable natural and cultural resources. For these reasons, the continued and effective implementation of America's existing MPAs, including all recently designated and expanded sites, is vital to the nation's interests. To that end, implementing the attached Action Agenda will improve efficiency and efficacy of our management of these national ocean treasures and enable them to provide even greater economic and environmental benefits for our people.

As you are aware from our letter of May 31, 2017, our Committee must be reauthorized by the President by September 30, 2017, in order to continue operating. We greatly value our relationship with your Departments and look forward to continuing to provide the consensus-based views of ocean stakeholders to you as a Federal Advisory Committee, as we have done since 2003. We urge you to continue to support this structured mechanism to include input from the public (such as our volunteer experts from industry and tourism) in the planning and management of these important places.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian E. Baird". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian Baird
Chair, Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

cc.

Ben Friedman, Performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere

W. Russell Callender, Assistant Administrator, NOAA

Lauren Wenzel, Designated Federal Official, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries