



Everglades Coalition

1000 Friends of Florida
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation
Audubon Florida
Audubon of Southwest Florida
Audubon of the Western Everglades
Audubon Society of the Everglades
Backcountry Fly Fishers of Naples
Caloosahatchee River Citizens Association/
Riverwatch
Center for Biological Diversity
Clean Water Action
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Defenders of Wildlife
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society
Earthjustice
Environment Florida
Everglades Foundation
Everglades Law Center
Everglades Trust
Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund
Florida Defenders of the Environment
Florida Keys Environmental Fund
Florida Native Plant Society
Florida Oceanographic Society
Friends of the Arthur R. Marshall
Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Everglades
Hendry-Glades Audubon Society
International Dark-Sky Association,
FL Chapter
Izaak Walton League of America
Izaak Walton League Florida Division
Izaak Walton League Florida Keys Chapter
Izaak Walton League Mangrove Chapter
Last Stand
League of Women Voters of Florida
Loxahatchee River Coalition
Martin County Conservation Alliance
Miami Pine Rocklands Coalition
Miami Waterkeeper
National Audubon Society
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Carolina Outward Bound School
Ocean Research & Conservation Association
Reef Relief
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
Save It Now, Glades!
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Florida Chapter
Sierra Club Broward Group
Sierra Club Calusa Group
Sierra Club Central Florida Group
Sierra Club Loxahatchee Group
Sierra Club Miami Group
Snook and Gamefish Foundation
South Florida Audubon Society
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
The Florida Wildlife Federation
The Institute for Regional Conservation
The National Wildlife Federation
The Urban Environment League of
Greater Miami

August 14, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross

Secretary

U.S. Department of Commerce

1401 Constitution Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20230

Re: NOAA-NOS-2017-0066, Review of national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments designated or expanded since April 28, 2007 under Executive Order 13795 Section 4(b)

Dear Secretary Ross,

On behalf of the 61 member organizations of the Everglades Coalition committed to the protection and restoration of America's Everglades, we write to express our strong support for America's National Marine Sanctuary System and encourage you to continue conserving our nation's most valuable underwater resources. We ask that you preserve the current designations and protections of the national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments under review pursuant to Executive Order 13795, and reject any attempts to weaken their protections by opening them to energy and mineral extraction.

Across our country, national marine sanctuaries are invaluable resources that protect important habitat for wildlife, conserve biodiversity and maritime heritage, serve as living laboratories, and provide recreational and economic opportunities for present and future generations. While the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS) is not under this current federal review, we recognize that the ecological health of FKNMS is inextricably linked to that of Everglades National Park, including Florida Bay, and the Greater Everglades Ecosystem and that it protects the unique waters of the Florida Keys that are a national treasure and of international significance. FKNMS is an active

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participant in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, seeking to protect the ecosystem's water quality by addressing the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of freshwater flows into the South Florida ecosystem and Florida Bay.

Healthy coastal national parks depend on healthy aquatic ecosystems, which are protected by national parks, national marine sanctuaries, and marine national monuments. There are 88 coastal parks in the National Park System covering more than 11,000 miles of shoreline and 2.5 million acres of oceans and Great Lakes' waters. Similar to national parks, national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments help to conserve some of our country's most prized underwater resources of natural, cultural, and historic significance. Setting aside and strengthening protections for marine areas both within and beyond the boundaries of our national parks is critically important to the health of ocean ecosystems throughout the country.

Millions of visitors frequent national marine sanctuaries each year, and they generate approximately \$8 billion annually to local economies. They support countless jobs in the tourism, recreation, fishing, and research industries and provide education and research opportunities for millions of Americans. We understand what these economic values mean to the communities that benefit from healthy marine protected areas across the country. In Florida, a healthy FKNMS is vital to the state's multi-billion dollar fishing and ecotourism industry, including commercial and recreational fishing, snorkeling, diving, boat and equipment rentals, and other related businesses.

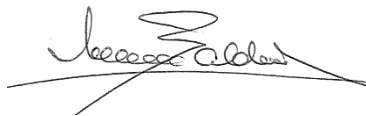
Marine sanctuaries exist because communities around them requested their designations, and their expansions included extensive and inclusive public processes and interagency dialogue, with multiple opportunities for public input. The Administration should uphold the results of these public processes and the strong desire of many communities for increased marine protections and the many economic benefits that accompany sanctuary and monument designations.

Through America's marine sanctuaries and monuments, we are conserving our coastal heritage and surrounding ecosystems for generations to come. Please look for ways to preserve and strengthen the National Marine Sanctuary System, and not jeopardize the marine treasures they protect and economies they support.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry
Co-Chair



Michael J. Baldwin
Co-Chair

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