

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2016

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
H-310 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Honda
Acting Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Honda:

As you craft the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully encourage you to provide \$60.5 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS). Specifically, we ask you to include \$55 million for Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) and \$5.5 million for Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC).

National marine sanctuaries embody our nation's commitment to conserve the best of our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes. The National Marine Sanctuary System, managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, encompasses more than 170,000 square miles of our marine and Great Lakes waters. Among all the statutes enacted by Congress to govern ocean resources, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act stands alone in terms of the comprehensiveness, participation, transparency, and balanced, multi-use approach that it provides for engaging all stakeholders. Sanctuaries foster economic growth, support jobs and businesses, generate billions of dollars in local revenue, preserve maritime heritage and cultural resources, and provide valuable public access for ocean tourism, recreation, research, exploration, and education. National marine sanctuaries are vital to maintaining the healthy ocean ecosystems that underpin our incredibly productive coastal economies.

Local communities nationwide are voicing their support for sanctuaries after experiencing the success of the National Marine Sanctuary System. The recent expansions at existing sites and opportunities for new site nominations and designations are the result of passionate citizens and widespread community interest. In response to this groundswell of local action, ONMS should receive increased funding to be responsive to the growing enthusiasm for national marine sanctuaries. However, despite the program's well-known public support and increased responsibilities, ONMS has not received adequate appropriations for consecutive budget cycles.

We are concerned that budget reductions could force ONMS to reduce economic opportunities, close visitors centers, cancel collaborative partnerships with museums and universities, terminate education and research initiatives, and diminish enforcement capacities. In particular, the sanctuary visitor centers, facilities, and vessels supported by PAC funds anchor local tourism and recreation economies and enable ONMS to complete core research, education, and law enforcement missions that simply cannot be accomplished from land alone.

We strongly encourage you to remedy this situation by supporting \$60.5 million for sanctuaries in FY17. Your support for national marine sanctuaries will send a powerful and necessary message about the economic growth and job creation benefits of healthy ocean and coastal resources, while simultaneously underscoring the continuing ecological and aesthetic value of America's underwater treasures. We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress



KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress



SCOTT PETERS
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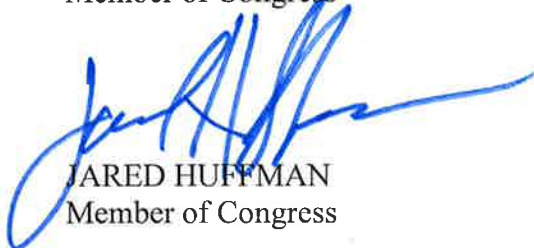
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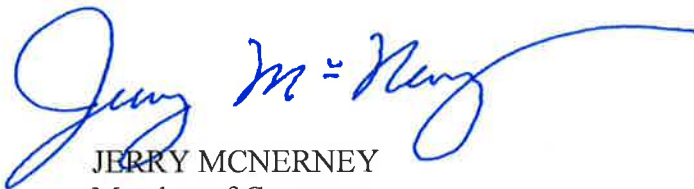
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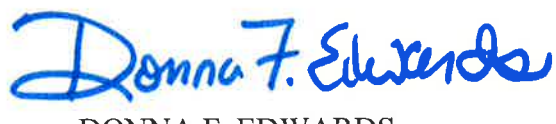
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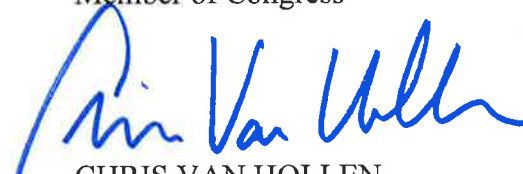

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