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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
CHAIRSMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES,
WILDLIFE AND OCEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ISLAND AFFAIRS

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER
AND EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

October 24, 2008

The Honorable James L. Connaughton
Chairman
Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Chairman Connaughton,

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with you in Guam to discuss the proposed marine monument sites, including the Northern Mariana Islands and the Mariana Trench. Fishing and marine recreation are an important part of the culture and economy in Guam and many of my constituents depend upon the ocean waters to make a living. Tourism related to fishing and ocean recreation is one the main attractions that brings thousands of visitors to Guam each month.

Because of that fact, Guam is dedicated to careful stewardship of our marine resources. We have taken many steps to preserve the aquatic resources in and around Guam and to ensure that fishing industries comply with rules and regulations that are in place to sustain a healthy marine resource. I view retention of local flexibility to manage our marine resources in a way that balances the protections needed for sustainable marine resources with a thriving economy as an important sovereignty issue.

As such, I am opposed to the use of the Antiquities Act to create one or more marine national monuments in the CNMI and the Mariana Trench in an expedited fashion that involves little input from stakeholders and local communities. Moreover, the lack of detail regarding the President's proposals is even more reason for requiring additional input from stakeholders. I believe the process in place under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, which involves formal public consultation of stakeholders, is a far better process that could be used to assess the merits of these proposals. This process would help affected individuals better understand the details of the proposal and develop alternatives that would meet Administration and community goals. I also believe that fisheries should be managed through the Magnuson-Stevens Act process and the regional fishery management councils. At this time, it is not clear that the proposals being considered by the Administration would ensure utilization of the fishery management councils.

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In short, where local conservation efforts have proven to be successful, I believe we should employ existing administrative processes that provide a proper role for ongoing local involvement in the management of our precious marine resources. I am extremely concerned that the process that is being employed now, in the last weeks of the Bush Administration, does not provide for adequate public input, let alone adequate Congressional oversight.

We must work together to protect our ocean resources. I urge your support and leadership with the federal agencies to work closer in partnership with the local communities to develop proposals that satisfy more stakeholders concerns.

Sincerely,


MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress



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Michael W. Cruz, M.D.
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27 OCT 2008

James L. Connaughton
Chairman
Council of Environmental Quality
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

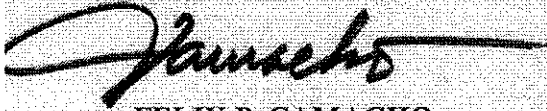
Dear Mr. Connaughton:

Hafa Adai! Marine resources within the Marianas Trench are extremely valuable and the Government of Guam has several concerns regarding the designation of a marine conservation management area in this region. We are not in support of a sudden declaration of a monument or conservation status within the Marianas Trench by Executive Order of the President because such a process would not allow for an appropriate consideration of cultural, environmental, economic and multiple use implications which require a considerable amount of time. The creation of such a monument entails detailed planning and should include, at minimum, an assessment of resource values and potential uses, an assessment of impacts to the local communities, meaningful stakeholder input, a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, and long term management and monitoring strategy. None of these analyses have been conducted.

While the mission of the Department of Defense is crucial for national security and the Marianas Trench has high strategic military value, the designation of a monument without a complete assessment of Department of Defense operations and procedures would compromise the ultimate intent and purpose of a monument—the protection and conservation of marine resources. Furthermore, if a monument should be established, it is crucial that the interests of the Government of Guam and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands be incorporated into preliminary designs and studies. For example, the southern islands of the Marianas Trench have higher biodiversity and greater habitat diversity as compared to the northern islands. It is imperative that facts such as these are considered in a site selection process. In addition to involvement of the local governments, meaningful stakeholder input from the general public is crucial especially with regard to marine conservation actions. Also, the Government of Guam was assured by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration representatives during their recent visit that the current management of potentially affected fisheries would not be modified. Finally, joint responsibility for management of the proposed area of conservation should be shared by the local jurisdiction and the federal government.

I believe that the management of cultural, economic, and environmental resources should be conducted in an open and inclusive manner for all the residents of the Mariana Islands.

Sinseru yan Magåhet,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Camacho', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

FELIX P. CAMACHO

I Maga' låhen Guåhan

Governor of Guam