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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES,
WILDLIFE AND OCEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSULAR AFFAIRS

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

November 21, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
The President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to reiterate my opposition to the use of the Antiquities Act by you for the creation of future marine national monuments. Decisions under authorities granted by the Antiquities Act should not supplant other more deliberative and consultative administrative processes found under other statutory authorities that better serve both the interests of affected local communities and the protection of nationally-significant marine resources. I am most concerned with proposals to designate one or more marine national monuments in the waters off the coasts of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), including areas that encompass the Mariana Trench. The existing approach of expedited consideration to such proposed monument designations has not adequately engaged stakeholders and local communities, and this in turn threatens to undermine future local acceptance and cooperation in the management of these marine resources.

Specifically, the lack of detail regarding the various proposals under consideration by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) continues to preclude community leaders and other stakeholders on Guam and in the CNMI from meaningful participation in the development of locally-viable options. Indigenous fishing, recreational fishing and marine recreation are each vital parts of Guam's economy, and it is imperative that a detailed, clear proposal be submitted for specific response from local elected officials, community leaders and other affected stakeholders before any final administrative action is taken to designate any new marine protected area in this region. As we have yet to see a formal or detailed proposal from your Administration, it remains unclear whether the creation of one or more new marine protected areas in the Pacific Basin will be subject to sufficient planning for the impact on the resource and its potential uses (current and future), or the impacts on the local communities and relevant stakeholders. The lack of specific proposals also excludes the possibility of working cordially and collaboratively to develop preferred alternatives that best address our shared goal of long-term marine resource protection and conservation.

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I urge that additional protections for our oceans and coasts be assessed through the processes in place under existing statutes. The National Marine Sanctuaries Act provides a model for marine protection through public consultation and stakeholder involvement. Fishing is regulated under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act with local involvement through the Regional Fishery Management Councils.

My constituents on Guam generally share your concern for the sound stewardship of marine resources but oppose a marine national monument. A collaborative approach for the protection and management of these resources will lead to proposals that satisfy more stakeholder concerns and respect indigenous culture. I, therefore, respectfully request that you refrain from using any authorities granted to you under the Antiquities Act or otherwise to provide for any marine national monument designation or any new restrictions affecting the waters off of Guam, the CNMI, or encompassing the Mariana Trench.

Thank you for your consideration of the concerns of the people of Guam on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Madeleine Z. Bordallo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Chairwoman

Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans