



August 16, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross Jr.
Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Secretary,

California is home to four National Marine Sanctuaries under review pursuant to the President's Executive Order 13795 "Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy" – Channel Islands, Monterey Bay, Greater Farallones, and Cordell Bank. The designation and expansion of each of these represents the culmination of a careful and complex process of Congressional review and public input spanning decades. Once designated, a National Marine Sanctuary becomes a national treasure.

Recent studies commissioned by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have shown that the regional and statewide economic benefits derived from California's National Marine Sanctuaries to be in the billions of dollars annually and the jobs supported in the hundreds. Consequently, an objective evaluation of revoking any National Marine Sanctuary designation or expansion must be balanced against an analysis of the economic contribution of an intact, unaltered sanctuary to a region's and state's economy.

In addition to significantly contributing to the state's economy, California's National Marine Sanctuaries bolster the sustainability of our marine ecosystems. They can help restore biodiversity, preserve maritime heritage, and protect against the dangerous risks of offshore oil and gas drilling. In the face of a changing climate, National Marine Sanctuaries are critical to ensuring healthy ocean ecosystems and the coastal livelihoods and economies that rely on them.

Over the past four decades, every California Governor – both Republican and Democrat – has supported the designation of National Marine Sanctuaries. I object to any effort to revoke or change the boundaries of the state's National Marine Sanctuaries. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Laird".

John Laird
Secretary for California Natural Resources

cc: Members of the California Congressional Delegation

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