

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding any proposed actions to reopen commercial fishing in the Pacific Marine National Monuments, including Papahānaumokuākea, Pacific Remote Islands, Rose Atoll, and the Mariana Trench. While our nation's fisheries, which generate billions of dollars of revenue each year, have been hard hit by the economic downturn from the coronavirus, we are committed to identifying solutions that fix the immediate crisis, which is one of demand and not supply, without harming the economic contributions of the industry to this and future generations.

The U.S. has been a global leader in both safeguarding marine wildlife and ensuring sustainable fisheries. Protections for the Pacific Marine National Monuments only serve to benefit both these goals and allowing fishing within these protected areas would be detrimental to the thousands of species they protect, including the healthy fish populations on which the industry relies.

The marine monuments reflect years of bipartisan support for the protection of America's special places, rich in history and biological significance. Home to an unparalleled array of turtles, seabirds, and whales – even one of the oldest organisms on the planet, black coral – the waters of the marine monuments offer a critical baseline for scientific research to study changing marine ecosystems, such as the impact of ocean warming and increased acidification. Given the immense scientific interest in these areas, it is imperative that we ensure the continued health of these incredible areas.

Currently, industrial fishing interests are claiming the U.S. fishing fleets need access to the marine monuments in the Pacific in order to provide relief from economic hardships resulting from COVID-19. Unfortunately, the reality is that these boats remain docked, a result of rock bottom prices stemming from decreased demand. The request to open these areas to commercial fishing has not and will not make a significant impact on the industry's overall profitability.

We believe in taking measures that can actively support our fishing industry, both during this time of crisis and into the future. Marine monuments are a key tool in achieving this goal. These monuments are capable of conserving biodiversity and bolstering catch of adjacent fisheries due to the spillover of healthy populations outside the protected area where they can then be caught. The benefits of this "spillover effect" are demonstrated through data revealing vessels fishing just outside the boundaries of marine protected areas – also known as "fishing the line." This phenomenon has been demonstrated in other marine protected areas throughout the world. By continuing to provide these spillover benefits, marine monuments actually help ensure the sustainability of this valuable U.S. fishery into the future.

It is also important to note the level of collaboration and transparency involved in the designation of these monuments. A diverse group of stakeholders participated in public fora and comment periods

to ensure that marine protections were implemented with public input. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs became a Co-trustee of Papahānaumokuākea to elevate the Native Hawaiian voice at all levels of decision making in the governance of the Monument. Fishers too were provided a seat at the table: the proposed areas of both the Pacific Remote Islands and the Papahānaumokuākea Monument expansions were ultimately reduced to better accommodate the fishing industry.

While dynamic solutions to support American COVID-19 relief are necessary, the current situation in the Pacific indicates that the expansion of commercial fishing in the monuments will not aid this effort and will ultimately be a detriment to the longevity of the fishing industry. We welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about solutions that will support fishers in the long term and allow for them to prosper.

Sincerely,



ED CASE  
Member of Congress, Hawai'i-01



RAUL M. GRIJALVA  
Chair, House Natural Resources Committee



JARED HUFFMAN  
Chair, Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and  
Wildlife  
House Natural Resources Committee



DEB HAALAND  
Chair, Subcommittee on National Parks,  
Forests, and Public Lands  
House Natural Resources Committee



ALAN LOWENTHAL  
Chair, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral  
Resources  
House Natural Resources Committee



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN  
Vice Chair for Insular Affairs  
House Natural Resources Committee



TULSI GABBARD  
Member of Congress, Hawai'i-02



MICHAEL F.Q. SAN NICOLAS  
Member of Congress, Guam-At Large

cc: The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary of the Interior  
The Honorable Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce