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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

October 7, 2015

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DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Ms. Christy Goldfuss
Managing Director
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Ms. Eileen Sobeck
Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Goldfuss and Ms. Sobeck:

The House Natural Resources Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee recently held an oversight hearing on the potential designation of marine national monuments, including one off of the coast of New England.¹ We are sending this letter to request further information about the Administration's designation of new marine monuments or expansion of existing marine monuments.

It is concerning that the Administration has made available very little information about the number or scope of these potential future designations. During the aforementioned hearing, one witness criticized the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) September 15, 2015 town hall meeting on the potential designation off of New England as a "charade,"² because so few details regarding the potential monument designation were provided at that meeting. NOAA officials limited stakeholders opportunities to express their concerns about the permanent impacts of the designation to just two minutes.³ When asked at the Subcommittee's hearing if there were any plans to hold additional public stakeholder meetings

¹ The House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee held an oversight hearing entitled "*The Potential Implications of Pending Marine National Monument Designations*" on September 29, 2015

² Testimony of Mr. Mr. Jon Williams, Owner, The Atlantic Red Crab Company, New Bedford, Massachusetts before the House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on "*The Potential Implications of Pending Marine National Monument Designations*", p. 1

³ Id

on the possible marine national monument designation, a NOAA official bluntly responded that the agency is not required to gather any public input under the Antiquities Act.⁴

Further, the day after the Subcommittee's hearing, a chain of emails were publicly released which raise serious questions regarding the Administration's plans for a new marine monument designation and the potential involvement of a number of outside interests. Specifically, the emails show representatives from the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Pew warning their members to avoid talking to the "outside world" about the organizations' efforts to influence the Administration to announce a Marine National Monument off of New England during the "Our Ocean Conference" in Chile.⁵ After these emails were publicized, the President of the Conservation Law Foundation defended the communications, stating they did not want to "give the opposition more of an advantage" and that "[t]he more time they had, the more opportunity [the opposition] would have...to organize against it."⁶

The CLF President's statements, along with the potential collusion suggested in the emails, are very troubling and speak to the Administration's need for greater transparency regarding potential future marine monument designations or revisions. In order to foster such transparency, please provide the following no later than October 30, 2015:

1. A complete list of the names, positions, and agencies of all Executive branch staff who have been assigned to work on any and all current and future national marine monuments, including the potential New England designation;
2. Records of all meetings regarding the designation or revision of national monuments between the Executive branch staff identified in Request 1 and any third-party organizations or individuals;
3. A full and complete accounting of the direct and indirect costs incurred as a result of all such meetings described in Request 2, as well as activities, including correspondence, related to such potential future designations;
4. All communications, documents, emails, correspondence, and/or Memoranda related to such designations (or other revisions or expansions) to and from Executive branch agency staff;

⁴ Statement made by Dr. Holly Bamford, Acting Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management, National Ocean Service, before the House Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on "*The Potential Implications of Pending Marine National Monument Designations*".

⁵ <http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060025612>

⁶ Id.

5. All internal and external Executive branch communications, including, but not limited to, communications with non-governmental organizations, related to the September 15, 2015 NOAA Town Hall meeting in Providence, Rhode Island;
6. All internal and external Executive branch communications and documents related to proposed national marine monuments and the "Our Oceans Conference."

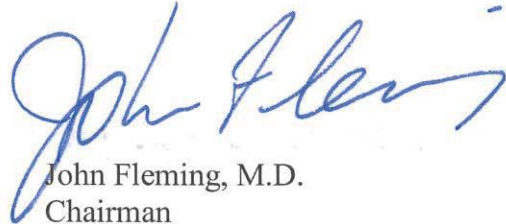
As witnesses indicated in testimony before the Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee hearing, the public input process surrounding the designation or expansion of national marine monuments has been woefully inadequate, or even nonexistent. The American people and those impacted by such potential designations deserve the right to know now what the federal government is or has been doing behind closed doors, given that a true public process simply does not exist under current law or practice. We hope you agree and stand ready to work with you to remedy this alarming situation.

Enclosed are instructions for complying with Committee requests. Please have your staff contact Kiel Weaver, Staff Director for the Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee, at (202) 225-8331 with any questions.

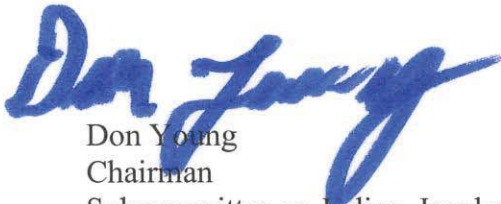
Sincerely,



Rob Bishop
Chairman
House Natural Resources Committee



John Fleming, M.D.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans



Don Young
Chairman
Subcommittee on Indian, Insular, and
Alaska Native Affairs



Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen
Vice-Chairman
Subcommittee on Indian, Insular, and
Alaska Native Affairs

cc: The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources