



February 25, 2008

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The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
U.S. House of Representatives
2302 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Mollohan:

We, the Board of Directors of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, are writing in support of the ocean programs of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). ***We strongly encourage you to support appropriations for NOAA at the \$4.5 billion level for Fiscal Year 2009. Within that amount, we recommend that you appropriate \$80 million—\$60 million ORF and \$20 million PAC—for the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. As Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, we urge you to submit an appropriations request letter that demonstrates your support and commitment for these funding levels.***

Investments in NOAA yield great returns for the nation, especially when you consider that over half of the nation's gross domestic product is generated in coastal counties and adjacent waters, yielding about \$6.4 trillion. Through its ocean protection and management, weather forecasting, nautical charting, data collection and synthesis, fisheries management, hazard mitigation, climate research, and education and outreach efforts, no other federal agency affects this country's 300 million Americans every day the way NOAA does. Though \$4.5 billion averages out to only \$15 per person annually, NOAA's value is comparatively immeasurable.

Key NOAA programs have been level-funded or even cut in recent fiscal cycles. We sincerely applaud your hard work in Fiscal Year 2008 in trying to enact increased funding for such an important domestic agency as NOAA. So as we begin the FY09 process, we encourage you to continue your efforts to make funding increases for NOAA a reality by making the agency and its important elements a top priority.

Congressional support for NOAA continues to improve as more Members

of Congress realize the impacts that NOAA services, offices, and programs have in their respective states and districts. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, for example, is a crucial thread in the larger fabric of ocean science, conservation and education, with a direct constituency in 11 states and 1 territory but impacting many more—both inland and coastal. ONMS acts as the trustee for the system of 13 sanctuaries and 1 marine national monument that protect the bounty of ecological and cultural resources within them, while it also manages the activities by certain users, including state and local partners, research centers, educators, and local residents and tourists.

An investment of \$80 million would enhance and sustain the effectiveness of the individual sites and the system as a whole, and would restore the FY05 enacted level and provide a \$12 million increase to account for inflation plus the system's growth over the years since then. It would also help support the necessary transitions to accommodate the recent elevation of the national program (formerly National Marine Sanctuary Program) to office status—a timely acknowledgement of all the great work being done at sites and at headquarters. In addition, \$80 million would be similar to the high level of funding that you, as Chairman of the CJS Subcommittee, agreed to be appropriate for ONMS during the FY08 process, and would be incremental progress towards the currently justifiable goal of \$100 million.

As an analog, consider that the National Marine Sanctuary System's 14 sites collectively protect approximately 150,000 square miles of area, which is about the same size as the *entire* U.S. National Park System and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge System combined. However, the ONMS is currently funded (FY08 enacted) at about 2% of the combined budgets of these other two systems, which are about \$2 billion and \$1 billion respectively. The increase to \$80 million only brings that fraction to just over 2.5%, but would allow for some necessary improvements in the management, operations, and facilities of the National Marine Sanctuary System. Now consider how much more \$100 million could do—improve enforcement, increase research and monitoring, and enhance educational programs, for instance. Admittedly, it is difficult to make a direct dollar per area comparison of these varied systems given their different structures and requirements. However, it does provide a gauge and highlights what the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is lacking despite its successful track record.

During this FY 2009 appropriations process, we urge you to be the ocean champion that this country so desperately needs by ***appropriating \$4.5 billion for NOAA, which would collectively provide critical funding for many important ocean programs and activities around the nation. This includes the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (a suggested \$80 million appropriation)***, as well as the Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, the National Marine Protected Areas Center, the National Sea Grant College Program, the Office of Education, and many others. Such NOAA programs are not only vital to our nation's environment, economy, and competitiveness, but also to the health and well being of each of your constituents and fellow citizens.

Best regards,



Dr. Robert Ballard



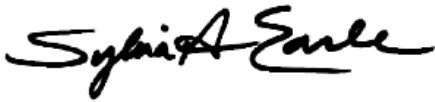
Dr. Kathryn Clark



Gregory Conklin



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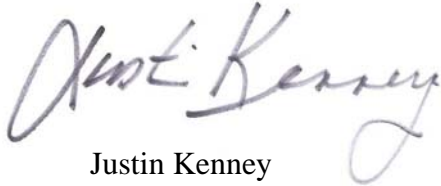
Tom Fry



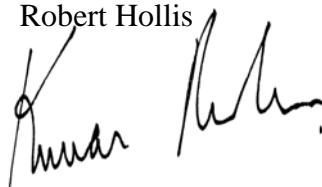
Terry Garcia



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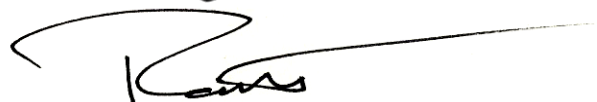
Jeffrey Mora



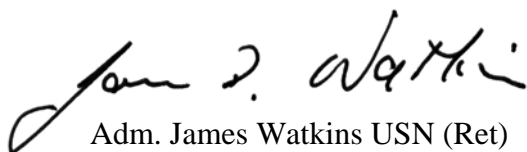
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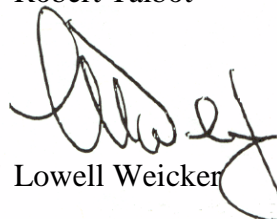
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