

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

We are writing in strong support of the 11 National Marine Sanctuaries and Marine National Monuments under review as part of Executive Order 13795, “Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy.”

National marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments, designated through the National Marine Sanctuaries Act and the Antiquities Act, are critical in keeping our oceans healthy and productive. These protected areas reduce the impacts of human activities on marine ecosystems, protect rare and endangered species, increase the productivity of surrounding fisheries, and help maintain local cultures, economies, and livelihoods that depend on the marine environment.

Protecting our oceans and Great Lakes also provides economic benefits. Across all National Marine Sanctuaries, about \$8 billion annually is generated in coastal and ocean economies from recreation, tourism, fishing, and research.¹ Almost one third of all commercial fish catch in California comes from national marine sanctuaries, contributing nearly \$330 million in economic impacts and 1,840 jobs across 15 counties.² In tourism and recreation, visitors to the Greater Farallones generated \$145 million in economic impacts and 1,100 jobs in 2011³; in Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, visitors generated \$92 million in economic impacts and 1,700 jobs in an adjacent tri-county area in 2005.⁴ All of these examples come from national marine sanctuaries that are under review.

The wealth of benefits from protected sanctuaries and monuments far outweigh any potential benefits of expanding oil and gas development off our coasts. The impacts of seismic testing alone can severely impact marine life ranging from whales and seals to the tiny zooplankton⁵ at the base of ocean food webs. The most significant concern is that any offshore oil and gas development will always put coastal communities and marine ecosystems at risk of a devastating oil spill; we saw the consequences decades ago in southern California and just a few years ago in the Gulf of Mexico.

¹ <https://www.commerce.gov/news/blog/2016/12/national-marine-sanctuaries-value-added-communities-and-blue-economy>

² http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/conservation/ca_fullreport.html

³ <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/socioeconomic/pdfs/ncc-recreation-report.pdf>

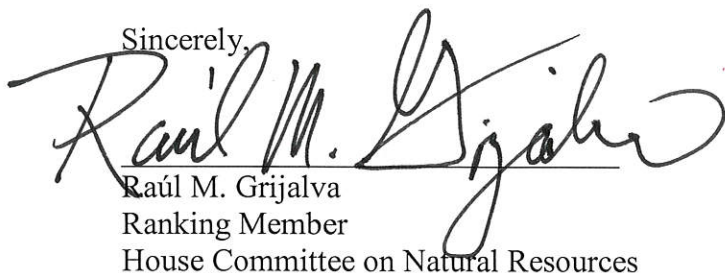
⁴ <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/socioeconomic/factsheets/thunderbay.html>

⁵ <https://www.nature.com/news/air-guns-used-in-offshore-oil-exploration-can-kill-tiny-marine-life-1.22167>

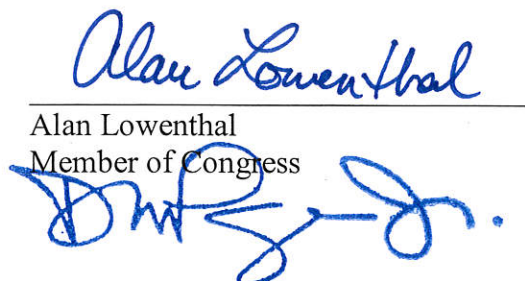
Protecting certain areas from extractive activities makes sense both environmentally and economically. As of June 2017, there are already 16.1 million acres of offshore waters under federal oil and gas leases, but the vast majority (73%) are not producing.⁶ Despite these numbers, offshore oil production has increased since 2007⁷; it is clear we don't need to take from every portion of our oceans and coasts to maintain a healthy energy economy. Instead, maintaining a diversity of uses and ocean spaces ensures that these vital ecosystems can provide benefits for all Americans.

National marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments protect ecologically and culturally unique places across our nation's public waters and were designated to sustain these places for future generations. From the underwater mountains and ancient deepwater corals of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument to the sacred sites in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, these ocean spaces are as important to our country's natural heritage as any of our iconic national parks and monuments on land, and we urge you to maintain strong protections for them.

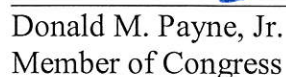
Sincerely,


Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources


Jared Huffman
Vice Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources

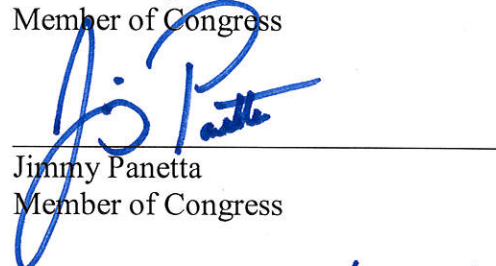

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

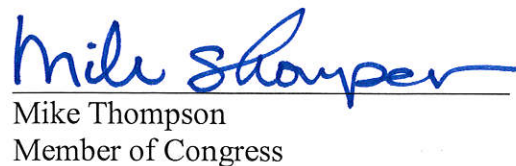

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress


Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress


Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress


Alma Adams
Member of Congress


Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress


Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

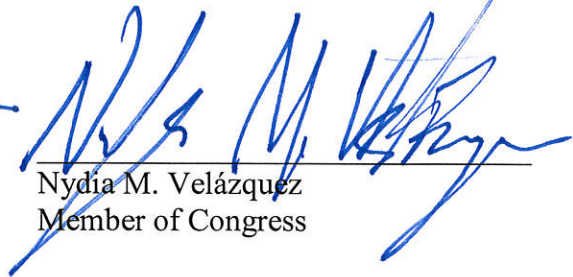

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

⁶ <https://www.boem.gov/2017-06-01-Combined-Lease-Report-for-June/>

⁷ <https://www.data.bsee.gov/Production/OCSProduction/Default.aspx>



Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress



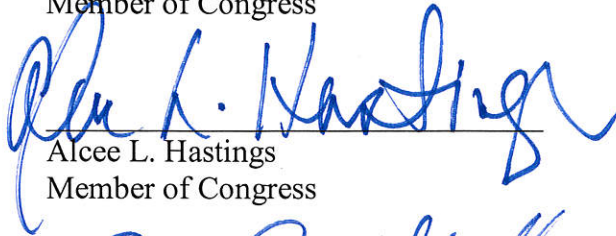
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



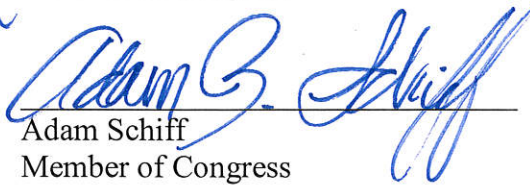
Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress



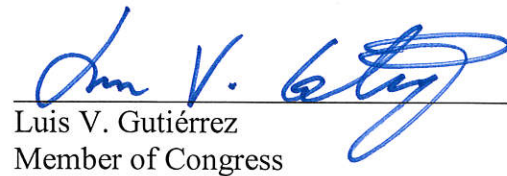
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Jose E. Serrano
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress



Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Member of Congress




John Conyers Jr.
Member of Congress




John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress



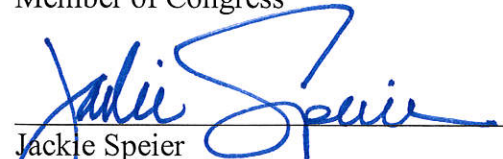
Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



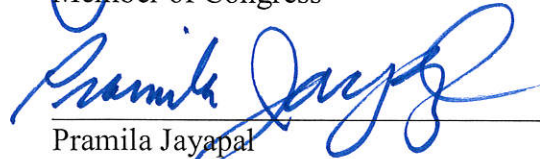
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Val B. Demings

Val B. Demings
Member of Congress

Jim McGovern

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Matthew A. Cartwright

Matthew A. Cartwright
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Jimmy Gomez

Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

Nanette Diaz Barragan

Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Bill Foster

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Grace Meng

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Katherine M. Clark

Katherine Clark
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



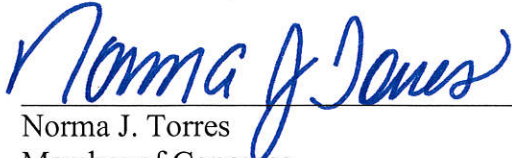
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress



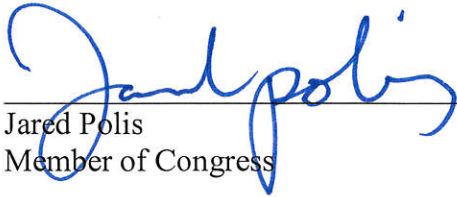
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress




Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



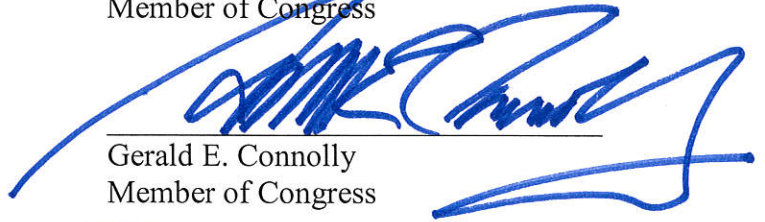
David Price
Member of Congress



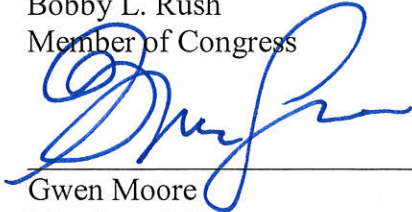
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Blunt Rochester". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress