



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

SEP 14 2011

Larry McKinney, Ph.D.
Chair
Flower Garden Banks National Marine
Sanctuary Advisory Council
c/o Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary
4700 Avenue U
Galveston, TX 77551

Dear Dr. McKinney:

Thank you for your letter in support of reauthorization of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA). Your input on this issue is valuable, especially given the key role that sanctuary advisory councils have in the management and stewardship of our National Marine Sanctuaries.

The NMSA is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) most comprehensive authority for protecting special areas across our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes for the benefit of present and future generations. An updated NMSA is not only critical for the continued success of the National Marine Sanctuary System, but also for meeting NOAA's mission, "to understand and predict changes in Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our Nation's economic, social, and environmental needs." It has been more than 10 years since its last reauthorization, and I agree with you on the need to continue to ensure the Act remains focused on protection, conservation, and sustainable management of these special places.

Further, through initiatives such as the President's National Ocean Policy and framework for coastal and marine spatial planning and through multiple restoration and recovery efforts in the Gulf of Mexico, National Marine Sanctuaries play an important role to assist in fulfilling the President's vision of ensuring "the protection, maintenance, and restoration of the health of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources" (Executive Order 13547—Stewardship of the Ocean, Our Coasts, and the Great Lakes; July 19, 2010).

As NOAA engages in efforts to reauthorize NMSA, the agency will work with stakeholders like you to ensure the best possible outcome. Thank you for your continued support of NOAA and our National Marine Sanctuaries. On behalf of NOAA, I look forward to working with you and others as we continue discussions on the reauthorization of NMSA.

Sincerely,

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

THE ADMINISTRATOR



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