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Joint Initiative Concerned about Future of Monuments

April 26, 2017 (Washington, DC) – Today President Donald Trump signed an executive order directing the Department of the Interior to review national monument designations under the Antiquities Act dating back to 1996. Marine national monuments will be part of that review. These marine monuments can be found along our coasts from Hawaii to the Northeastern seaboard and are key to safeguarding unique and vital ocean ecosystems. Marine protections have been shown to improve fish stocks, bolster food security, promote marine biodiversity, and buffer against the impacts of rapidly changing ocean conditions. Marine national monuments, including Papahānaumokuākea, Northeast Canyons and Seamounts, and Pacific Remote Islands, are also home to thousands of marine species, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth. Moreover, monuments like Papahānaumokuākea, are culturally significant and supported by local communities, ensuring preservation of cultural legacies for future generations.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is concerned that attempts to modify existing marine national monuments could jeopardize important progress that has been made toward ocean conservation in recent decades. As our [Ocean Action Agenda](#) explains, the protection of ecologically and culturally significant ocean and coastal areas is in our national interest. National monuments provide important ecological and economic benefits, including recreation, tourism, and education. “The oceans are held in the public trust and must be effectively managed for the enjoyment of current and future generations,” said Randy Repass, member of the Joint Initiative Leadership Council and former Chairman and CEO of West Marine. “The Antiquities Act has been a powerful tool and has helped conserve areas of cultural, scientific, and historic significance, while providing access for millions of Americans to enjoy.” For example, recreational fishing, a popular American pastime, is enjoyed within many marine monuments, along with snorkeling, diving, and scientific exploration.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the Antiquities Act into law to conserve “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest.” Sixteen presidents from both parties have used this authority to designate 157 national monuments across our lands and waters, including marine monuments that protect coral and fish, facilitate exploration and scientific research, and promote public education. Preserving special places is not a partisan issue – both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama have used this authority to safeguard areas of America’s oceans and coasts.

As the Trump Administration crafts its own legacy for our oceans, the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative urges the administration to consider the valuable role monuments play in ensuring ecological, historic, and cultural benefits for the welfare of current and future generations. The bipartisan Joint Initiative stands ready to help the Department of the Interior in its review by providing information that demonstrates the conservation, economic, and community benefits of marine monuments.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative brings together all sectors of the ocean community to catalyze action and monitor progress toward meaningful ocean policy reform. Meridian Institute serves as the secretariat for the Joint Initiative.