

July 7, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Secretary Ryan Zinke
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Wilbur Ross
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President Trump, Secretary Zinke, and Secretary Ross,

On behalf of Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, we are writing to urge you to uphold the designation of existing marine national monuments. We are concerned that revisiting marine national monument designations would undercut important progress that has been made toward ocean conservation in recent decades, endanger historic and cultural artifacts, and undermine the authority and integrity of the Antiquities Act.

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.” Over more than a century, 16 presidents, both Republican and Democrat, have used this authority to designate 157 national monuments across our lands and waters, including marine national monuments that protect our natural resources, facilitate exploration and scientific research, and promote public education.

The Antiquities Act is one of many important tools used to conserve areas of cultural, scientific, and historic significance to our great nation. These sites not only protect important ecological and cultural resources, but also provide significant economic benefits to neighboring communities. Preserving special places is not a partisan issue. While many presidents have used the Antiquities Act to designate national monuments, including Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, a review of existing monument designations is unprecedented.

From the South Pacific to the Northeastern seaboard, marine national monuments play a vital role in safeguarding components of our American heritage and identity. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument protects historic battlegrounds and artifacts, including the site of the Battle of Midway and the wreck of the *USS Yorktown*, as well as waters of important cultural significance to native Hawaiians. Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument safeguards rare seamounts that support ancient cold water corals and productive fisheries in the busy North Atlantic. Rose Atoll, Marianas Trench, and Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monuments

encompass scientifically important and unique ecosystems, from hydrothermal vent communities at the bottom of ocean trenches to endemic giant clam colonies and remote seabird outposts on far flung atolls. Collectively, these five marine national monuments are home to thousands of marine species, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth.

The protection of ecologically and culturally significant ocean and coastal areas is in our national interest. 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. Moreover, monuments ensure the preservation of cultural legacies for future generations, and by promoting recreation, tourism, and education, they provide important economic benefits to local communities. Recreational fishing, a popular American pastime and critical economic driver, is enjoyed within many marine national monuments, along with snorkeling, diving, and scientific exploration. Given these abundant benefits, it comes as no surprise that a majority of Americans support marine national monument designations and expansions. This is evident in the fact that thousands of citizens have submitted comments in support of maintaining these protections.

As the Trump Administration crafts its own legacy for our oceans, we urge the administration to consider the valuable role monuments play in ensuring ecological, historic, and cultural benefits for the welfare of current and future generations.

Sincerely,



Christine Todd Whitman
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative



Norman Y. Mineta
Co-Chair, Joint Ocean Commission Initiative

Joint Initiative Co-Chairs and Leadership Council Members

The Honorable Christine Todd Whitman | The Honorable Norman Mineta | Frances Beinecke | Don Boesch | Lillian Borrone | The Honorable Norm Dicks | Quenton Dokken | Vice Admiral Paul Gaffney | Robert Gagosian | Sherri Goodman | Scott Gudes | The Honorable Conrad Lautenbacher | Margaret Leinen | Christopher Lischewski | The Honorable Jane Lubchenco | Julie Packard | The Honorable Leon Panetta | John Pappalardo | The Honorable Pietro Parravano | Diane Regas | Randy Repass | Andrew Rosenberg | The Honorable William Ruckelshaus | Paul Sandifer

Appendix A

Marine monuments protect ocean, honor war sacrifices

By: Norman Y. Mineta (Published [May 21, 2017 in Honolulu Star Advertiser](#))

When President Donald Trump and Australia Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull met recently, they commemorated the Battle of the Coral Sea's 75th anniversary. Soon, in early June, we will remember the Battle of Midway, another pivotal point in World War II. The war is not the only link these battles share. They are also connected by conservation — historical conservation of past sacrifices, and ecological conservation of vital ocean ecosystems.

In May 1942, American and Japanese naval forces engaged in the world's first all-carrier battle on the Coral Sea. Despite losing the *USS Lexington*, it was a victory as Japan was prevented from establishing an airbase in Papua New Guinea. This outcome would not have been possible without the *USS Yorktown*, which sustained damages significant enough for Japan to presume it was unavailable to defend Midway.

That assumption was wrong and Adm. Chester Nimitz recalled the *Yorktown* in preparation for an attack. After limping to Pearl Harbor and 72 hours of repairs, the carrier was deployed to help intercept the impending attack. The Battle of Midway is considered the turning point for the Pacific Theater in WWII but the price for the *Yorktown* was steep as it sunk on June 7, 1942.

The *Lexington*, *Yorktown* and many of the brave sailors and airmen who served aboard now rest on the Pacific Ocean seafloor. While the Coral Sea and waters around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are thousands of miles apart, they share this important history.

They are also presently connected as both include marine reserves created by previous governments and at risk under reviews by current leadership. Soon the Interior and Commerce Departments will decide the fate of many land and sea monuments. Our Pacific marine monuments remind us that preserving ecosystems also memorializes the sacrifices of war.

As a Cabinet member to a democratic and republican president, I am familiar with advising our commander-in-chief on important decisions that will shape our future. In 2000, while I served as commerce secretary, President Bill Clinton created the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. Six years later, while I was transportation secretary, President George W. Bush used executive authority to declare the same area Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. With the recent expansion by President Barack Obama, this monument now includes the *Yorktown* and other sacred remains from the Battle of Midway.

Beginning with Teddy Roosevelt, seven presidents have protected this magnificent island chain and surrounding waters that are rich in biology and history. Each executive decisions addressed concerns of the day and built upon previous protections, resulting in Earth's largest marine reserve and military memorial and a bipartisan legacy to be passed down to future generations.

A week before the *Yorktown* sank, my family — like many Japanese-Americans — was forced from our home in California and interned at Heart Mountain, Wyo. This confinement camp was similar to Honouliuli, which itself was preserved as a monument by the same presidential authority as those now under review.

The Antiquities Act has been used for over a century to protect some of America's most important places, including those that evoke painful memories. Such designations can help ensure we avoid repeating past mistakes.

As a former presidential adviser, I urge Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross to conclude their reviews by recommending no changes to the Antiquities Act or any national monument. Doing so will preserve uniquely American biological, cultural and historical resources, as well as the integrity of presidential authority.

Norman Y. Mineta, co-chariman of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, is from California and a former member of the U.S. House and co-founder of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. He served in the Cabinets of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.