

Friends of the Monument  
PO 50X 500921  
Saipan, MP 96950

October 15, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

RE: Friends' vision for the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

The Friends of the Monument formed in the spring of 2008 to express the voice of the local community and consists of a cross-section of indigenous and resident people of the CNMI who are dedicated to the conservation, preservation and protection of marine flora, fauna and geological features of the oceans; and the creation and proper management of a Marianas Trench Marine National Monument.

We, the Friends of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, thank you and support your interest in declaring the marine eco-systems surrounding the three northernmost Mariana Islands of Uracas, Maug, and Asuncion as a Marine National Monument in accordance with the Antiquities Act of 1906. Declaring the waters as a Monument under the Act would expedite the process of bringing protection to the precious resources found in the waters there, while establishing specific federal responsibilities toward governance of the Monument, and enhancing our Ocean Legacy.

Additionally, we ask that you specifically include in the language of the Executive Order under the Antiquities Act that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, through its National Marine Sanctuaries Program, be the federal agency that administers, co-manages, and enforces the Monument, along with the CNMI.

Furthermore, any co-management agreement must anticipate unknowns and allow for responsible change. The management arrangement, goals, and objectives of the Monument should be reviewed on a regular 10-year basis.

The health of the world's oceans has declined drastically over the past several hundred years, and we believe the most effective means of restoring their wellbeing is through the

setting aside of large no-take zones or sanctuaries, such as the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument. This would offer marine life a safe haven.

We believe that the creation of a Monument in our northern waters would generate many benefits for the CNMI. The Monument will enhance the stature of the CNMI on the world stage as a contributor towards the revitalization of the world's oceans, and as a contributor to the Micronesia Challenge<sup>1</sup> to set aside and effectively conserve 30% of the region's near-shore resources by 2020. The Monument would also provide countless benefits to the people of the CNMI.

We have taken the liberty of spelling out a number of the benefits, in the form of a vision that we believe would accrue from the Monument. These fall into six categories: management and enforcement, culture and tradition, conservation, education, research, and economic development, which we address, in turn, below.

**Management and Enforcement** –by which we mean not only management of the Monument once it is declared, but also the process of defining how the Monument would function once it is established.

The Friends envision that the federal and local government officials will co-manage the Monument. We would like the Friends to be involved in this co-management; we are sure that there are innovative means for our members' support and contribution. For example, we hope that the initial Advisory Committee for the Monument includes members of the Friends and other conservation-minded people who actively supported the creation of the Monument.

Additionally, critical to these efforts are the necessary resources to enforce any protections established by a special designation. With this regard, we would request your assistance with the necessary equipment, training and support to properly enforce the designated area. We envision having planes and boats for enforcement and patrol. In order to better manage and enforce the protections of the Monument, we suggest that all vessels entering the Monument area should be required to carry a VMS tracking system and adopt strict invasive marine and terrestrial species prevention measures.

**Culture and Tradition**—by which we mean the life-styles, practices and beliefs of the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples that have been handed down from generation to generation.

The Friends believe, first of all, that the Chamorro and Carolinian cultures and tradition must be treated with respect, and taken into full account in decisions that are made about the management and use of the Monument. We should take into consideration the precepts of our indigenous culture and tradition when deciding issues like, for example, sustenance fishing, canoe travel and other similar matters.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2006, Palau President Tommy Remengesau issued a challenge to the head executives of all governmental entities in Micronesia to meet specific conservation goals, which is now known as the Micronesia Challenge.

**Consei:vation-by** which we mean the protection and preservation of the marine ecosystems and their inter-relationship with land ecosystems; and their continued presence and existence in the future.

The proposed Monument contains some of the world's most unique habitats and unusual features, such as chemosynthetic and photosynthetic organisms living side-by-side, mud volcanoes, vent communities and other natural wonders. One of these is volcanic coral reefs, which occur nowhere else in Micronesia. The coral reefs that exist there are flourishing and vibrant, and need protection to help guard our planet from the threat of global warming and potentially act as a source of corals for other marine areas.

The Friends acknowledge that people of the CNMI and the world have historically relied on the oceans for food and other resources. We believe that the need for continued availability of our precious, limited marine resources does not conflict with conservation. We believe that creating the Monument will help increase the oceans' abundance by contributing to the survival and recovery of depleted marine resources and biodiversity.

**Education-by** which we mean both formal and informal education, for students as well as the general public, for residents as well as the rest of the world, in all relevant media formats, produced both commercially and non-commercially.

The Friends believe that funding should be made available to enable oceanography to be taught in the schools, at the college and through lectures and programs for the general public, and to ensure that pertinent educational materials will be readily available, that careers in the marine and geological sciences will be encouraged, that opportunities for field trips for students, teachers, the general public and tourists should be made available.

We envision a *Visitors Center*, including a centrally-located facility funded under the auspices of the NOAA National Marine Sanctuaries Program that would be open to everyone and that would contain not only displays of various sorts, but would also offer related items for sale.

The Friends believe that the Visitors' Center would bring benefits not only to the local economy by attracting tourists, but to the people of the CNMI as it would showcase information about marine science and marine geology in general, about the Monument in particular, about the CNMI, and about its indigenous history and culture to all who visited it; it would present, in a variety of formats, the results of marine research done in the area and relevant research done elsewhere; it would exhibit related works created by students, teachers, artists, tourists; it would regularly present programs open to the public on matters related to marine life in general as well as marine life specific to the area, thus allowing the people of the CNMI, tourists and other visitors to benefit from the establishment of the Monument.

It is our dream that this Monument will inspire and contribute to the first indigenous students receiving their Ph.D in marine biology, deep-sea geology, or other ocean related sciences.

**Research-by** which we mean the process of studying marine life, geology, ecology and other sciences, and of data generation, as well as the products of such activity generated by scientists, teachers or students.

The Friends believe the researchers and scientists who base their work on the marine monument and its environs should be asked to obtain permission prior to undertaking research in the area and should share the information they gather with the local community through presentations at the visitor's center or in other forms and forums. They should make accommodations to take along local students and teachers on research trips, so that local students are encouraged to become scientists and researchers.

**Economic Development-by** which we mean assistance in improving the economy towards enabling the CNMI to become self-sufficient. The CNMI, being a small island with limited assets, will always be dependent to some extent on outside forces and influences, but certainly more is needed and can be done to increase independence.

There are many great economic benefits that we anticipate from the Monument. We envision a surge in media attention from your designation of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, which will attract more visitors to the CNMI. The CNMI relies heavily on tourism as its number one industry, and help to this sector of the economy-whether from traditional or high-end visitors-will have a significant beneficial impact. The Monument will likely attract scientists and other researchers, who will contribute financially while visiting or living here. The operation of the Visitors' Center and administration of the Monument will create jobs, both directly and indirectly.

The contribution that a Monument would make to the CNMI economy is in stark contrast to the present situation, where the only economic benefit that presently occurs from this significant resource is limited to illegal foreign fishing activities, such as shark finning. Obviously, this current economic activity has little benefit to the CNMI.

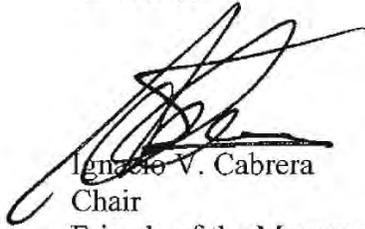
The Friends believe that the anticipated economic activities from the Monument are much more suited to the CNMI's image in the world and more productive of tangible benefits. The increased flow of traffic from Saipan, Tinian and Rota to the Monument would also benefit the people of the CNMI in that it would make more feasible resettlement of the Northern Islands and provide transportation and communication with the "lower" Northern Islands.

We envision the northern island of Pagan being used as a staging area for research, fuel storage facility, and other needs. Of particular benefit would be the expansion of the landing strip for easier and faster access. The provision of a floating dock could preserve its unique black sand beach.

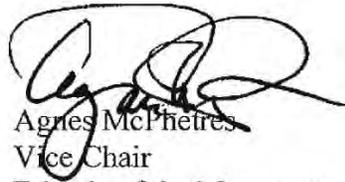
Greater protection of our Monument resources from illegal fishing, exploitation, or harvesting will also help our fishermen who follow the law to stay competitive.

In conclusion, the Friends of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument hope that you make the designation of this monument soon and expressly give it the highest possible protections available by law.

Sincerely,



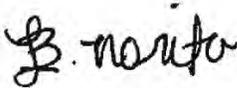
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Chair  
Friends of the Monument



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Vice Chair  
Friends of the Monument



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Friends of the Monument



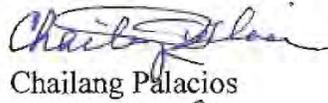
Belinda Norita



MarjaLee Taitano

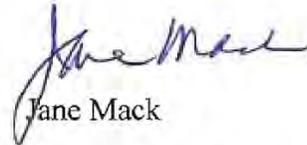


Ken Kramer



Chailang Palacios

Karl T. Reyes



Jane Mack



Cinta M. Kaipat



Emelain D. Fejeran



Wes Bogdan



Lynn Knight



David M. Sablan



Ruth L. Tigue with  
reservations

Ruth L. Tigue

cc: Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary of the Interior  
Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary of Commerce  
James Connaughton, CEQ Chairman  
Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., NOAA  
Benigno R. Fitial, Governor  
Arnold Palacios, House Speaker  
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