

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
SH-125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
SD-142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Shaheen and Ranking Member Moran:

The National Marine Sanctuary System is our network of over 620,000 square miles of protected waters held in trust for all Americans. National marine sanctuaries conserve nationally significant natural, historic, cultural resources, and sacred heritage sites for Native Americans and Native Hawaiians. Sanctuaries promote access to exploration and world-class outdoor recreation, increasing access to nature for all. National marine sanctuaries are sources for solutions.

They are living laboratories, outdoor classrooms, tourism and recreation destinations, blue carbon sinks, biodiversity safe havens, sacred sites and heritage landmarks, sources of inspiration, and centers of maritime commerce.

Sanctuaries and marine protected areas are vital to maintaining healthy ocean and Great Lakes ecosystems that underpin our productive coastal economies. They protect biodiversity and vital habitats for countless species of fish and wildlife and safeguard coastal communities from flooding and storms by increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change. Sanctuaries also safeguard extraordinary seascapes, sacred heritage sites, and historic shipwrecks that tell the stories of America's history.

National marine sanctuaries promote visitation, bolster tourism and robust recreational industries, and drive the growth of the blue economy by balancing protection with compatible use. Sanctuaries generate billions annually in local economies and support numerous jobs and businesses in the fishing, tourism, recreation, and scientific research sectors. They are living laboratories that enable cooperative science and research that improves resource management and advances innovative public-private partnerships.

Recognizing the value that sanctuaries bring and seeing the success of the current National Marine Sanctuary System, communities across the country continue to engage in nominating and

designating their most treasured places in marine and Great Lakes waters as national marine sanctuaries. There are currently six new community-based national marine sanctuaries in our Atlantic, Pacific, and Great Lakes waters undergoing the public sanctuary designation process. Providing increasing and robust funding to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is an investment in the growing communities both existing and in designation to ensure public engagement and public-private partnerships that are the hallmark of sanctuaries.

Engaging communities as stewards of these waters makes sanctuaries unique and provides a comprehensive, highly participatory approach to managing and conserving marine ecosystems and the Great Lakes for current and future generations. Public participation is a hallmark of sanctuaries and underscores their dedication to civic engagement and leadership. From nomination to day-to-day, communities are at the core of national marine sanctuaries. Recent sanctuary designations, nominations, and expansions are the result of passionate citizens and widespread community interest in conserving our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.

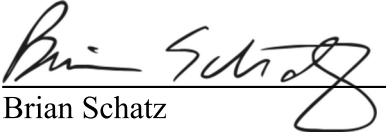
As you craft the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we urge you to support the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries at no less than \$100 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025. We respectfully request that you:


- Provide at least \$91.5 million for Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas, within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) account; and,
- Provide at least \$8.5 million for Marine Sanctuaries Construction, within NOAA's Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC) account.
- Direct NOAA to prioritize conservation, education, mapping, and research efforts across the agency in the National Marine Sanctuary System.
- Cap NOAA and the National Ocean Service corporate fees to no more than 5 percent of the annual appropriations.

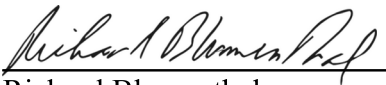
National marine sanctuaries connect people and communities through science, education, U.S. history, recreation, and stewardship and inspire community-based solutions that help individuals understand and protect the spectacular underwater habitats, wildlife, archaeological resources, and cultural seascapes of the United States. This is an opportunity to invest in America's waters and the communities and businesses that depend upon them. Robust funding will ensure sound management of these treasured places through community stewardship; support of mission critical tools, like small boats; active restoration of marine environments; preservation of maritime resources; and improved understanding of marine and Great Lakes ecosystems.

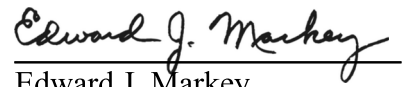
We strongly encourage you to invest in America's community-based national marine sanctuaries by supporting the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries at no less than \$100 million in Fiscal Year 2025. Your support for marine sanctuaries will send a powerful message about the benefits of a healthy ocean and Great Lakes and underscore the continuing ecological, economic, and historical value of America's underwater national treasures. We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator


Gary C. Peters
United States Senator


Alex Padilla
United States Senator


Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Raphael Butler
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator