

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 14, 2026

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Moran and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

The National Marine Sanctuary System is one of our country's most powerful tools for supporting coastal economies, preserving history, and ensuring that future generations have access to valuable natural resources. Spanning more than 629,000 square miles of ocean and Great Lakes waters, this network of protected areas is held in trust for all Americans.

National marine sanctuaries have become the heart of many coastal economies, balancing protection of resources with public access and drawing millions of visitors each year. This popularity directly translates into economic value. National marine sanctuaries generate at least \$8 billion annually and support tens of thousands of jobs across the country – from the coral reefs of the Florida Keys and Texas to the kelp forests of Washington State and the vibrant waters of Hawaii.

Thriving local economies and healthy ecosystems go hand-in-hand. The economic benefits of sanctuaries are only possible because the ecosystems within each sanctuary remain healthy and well managed. In addition to supporting tourism and jobs, healthy sanctuaries also provide essential ecosystem services and co-benefits, such as buffering shorelines from storms and serving as spawning grounds for commercial and recreational fisheries. In order to continue to make this scale of contribution to coastal economies and communities, sanctuaries must be actively studied, monitored, and maintained.

To ensure continued success, both individual sanctuaries and the broader sanctuary system require investments in management, scientific research, public outreach, and the upkeep of critical infrastructure such as visitors' centers, small vessels, offices, and research labs.

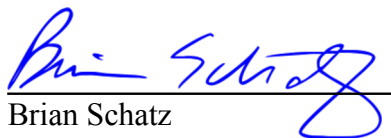
As you craft the fiscal year (FY) 2027 appropriations bill, we urge you to support the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries at no less than \$100 million with at least \$91.5 dedicated to operations and at least \$8.5 million dedicated to construction.

National marine sanctuaries connect people and communities through recreation, science, education, history, and stewardship. They 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, businesses, and public-private partnerships that depend upon them. Strong, sustained funding will ensure sound management of these treasured places.

We thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

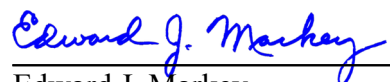

Brian Schatz
United States Senator


Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator


Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

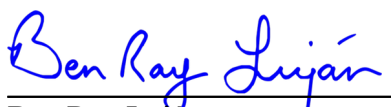

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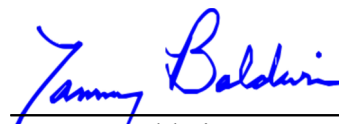
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Tammy Baldwin
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Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
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