UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMER
Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20230

November 18, 2011

The Honorable Carl Levin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Levin:

This is in response to your letter to Dr. Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, dated August 4, 2011, requesting the Administration's views on S. 485, the *Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve Boundary Modification Act.* She asked that I thank you for your meeting and tour of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (NMS), which provided an extraordinary opportunity to experience firsthand the impact that the Sanctuary has on the community. We understand that there is strong public support for the protection of this special place in Lake Huron. Thunder Bay NMS is unique as it is the only sanctuary located in the Great Lakes and exclusively within state waters. The Administration is committed to the protection of the Great Lakes and their rich history.

The Department of Commerce supports the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve Boundary Modification Act. The Act would extend the Thunder Bay NMS north and south to include the waters off Alcona, Alpena and Presque Isle Counties in Michigan and east to the International Boundary. The current sanctuary includes 448 square miles of water and 115 miles of shoreline, and the expansion would include 3,662 square miles and 226 miles of shoreline and protect an estimated total 177 shipwrecks.

Since designation, the local community and the Sanctuary Advisory Council have repeatedly expressed their support for a larger sanctuary boundary. In May 2007, the Thunder Bay Sanctuary Advisory Council recommended the expansion of the boundaries of the Sanctuary by an approximate 3,662 square mile area, with the primary rationale for the recommendation being increased preservation and protection of maritime heritage resources. Since that time, the Department has received additional letters of support for sanctuary expansion from over a dozen entities.[1] The Department agrees that an expansion of the Sanctuary will increase preservation and protection of maritime heritage resources for historians and divers and educational

[1] The City of Alpena, Alcona County, Alpena County, Alpena Township, the Michigan Sunrise Side Travel Association, Presque Isle Township, the City of Rogers City, Sanborn Township, the Sunrise Side Coastal Highway Management Council, the Huron Shores Chamber of Commerce, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, the Presque Isle County Development Commission, the Rogers City Chamber of Commerce, the Rogers City Travelers and Visitors Bureau, the Michigan Underwater Preserve Committee, the Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Thunder Bay Underwater Preserve Committee.

opportunities for students and researchers. Further, it will promote new tourism development opportunities for local businesses and the region's economy.

Thank you for your dedication to the Great Lakes and for your support of the Thunder Bay NMS. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 482-3663.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the transmittal of these views from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

April Boyd
Assistant Secretary for Legislative
and Intergovernmental Affairs