



May 1, 2008

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Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman  
Senator Ted Stevens, Vice Chairman  
United States Senate  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  
254 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Vice Chairman Stevens:

On behalf of our Board of Trustees, I want to thank you for your dynamic leadership in this and past Congresses in making ocean-related legislation a priority for your committee, given the myriad other issues you have to consider.

In the near term, you will be considering two pieces of legislation to expand three sites within the National Marine Sanctuary System. I write to express our support for passage of both bills: H.R. 1187—*Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries Boundary Modification and Protection Act* and S. 2281—*Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve Boundary Modification Act*. Both bills would help strengthen the sanctuary system, while helping to improve the increasingly dire state of our nation's ocean and coastal resources.

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### H.R. 1187

The Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) and the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary (CBNMS) are both off the northern coast of California, and would be expanded north and west along the Sonoma and Southern Mendocino coasts. The measures proposed in H.R. 1187 would not only increase protection for areas that are already part of the sanctuary system, but they would also protect valuable new areas that are highly productive upwelling zones that are hot spots for biodiversity. The protections afforded to these two sanctuaries would help make the areas more resilient in the face of risks that span from the far-reaching impacts of climate change to more local threats that might arise such as demonstrated by the recent Cosco Busan oil spill in San Francisco waters.

H.R. 1187 is widely supported by several local, state, and national

conservation groups, fishing associations, and government entities. Having passed out of the House under suspension of the rules by voice vote, the legislation is relatively non-controversial. I appreciate your efforts to continue its movement through the legislative process, and I hope enough time and political will remains to attain final passage by the end of this Congress.

**S. 2281**

The Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (TBNMS) was designated in 2000 in Lake Huron. TBNMS is the first sanctuary 1) in the Great Lakes, 2) located entirely in state waters, and 3) focusing solely on a large collection of underwater cultural resources—over 100 shipwrecks, spanning over a century of shipping history.

The area currently included in the TBNMS off the coast of Alpena, MI has been wholeheartedly embraced by the surrounding community, which proudly welcomes visitors to their “Sanctuary City.” Since the sanctuary’s designation, NOAA and the State of Michigan have partnered to educate the public about the significance of shipwrecks by establishing the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center. The center is a high-performance, sustainable building and is on track to become certified at the Gold level by the Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Program. It has been a vital and popular destination for residents and visitors of all ages, allowing the public to experience and appreciate the shipwrecks in and around Thunder Bay and strengthening northeastern Michigan’s identity as a premier location for Great Lakes maritime heritage interpretation, research, and recreation..

Therefore, S. 2281 would take great strides in increasing the protections for important maritime heritage resources that are now susceptible to damage from human activities, as well as continuing to increase public awareness of the rich maritime history within the Great Lakes. The legislation would extend the sanctuary’s boundaries to include the waters off Alcona, Alpena and Presque Isle counties in Michigan and extend the sanctuary east to the international water boundary with Canada. Currently, the sanctuary covers 448 square miles of water and 115 miles of shoreline, protecting 116 shipwrecks. S. 2281 proposes to increase this area to 3,722 square miles of water and 226 miles of shoreline, which would encompass an additional 180 shipwrecks.

If passed, this legislation would create a uniquely historic gem in our nation’s waters. I appreciate your efforts to move it forward.

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Thank you, again, for your consideration of both H.R. 1187 and S. 2281. Both bills are a result of the dedication of Members of Congress who believe in the importance of protecting our nation’s underwater treasures. I applaud your work to increase protections in the three sanctuaries encompassed in these bills, and thereby the National Marine Sanctuary System as a whole.

Sincerely,



Lori Arguelles  
President & CEO