



Friends of the Monument  
PO BOX 500921  
Saipan, MP 96950

April 17, 2009

Representative Greg Camacho Sablan  
423 Cannon House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

Hafa Adai Delegate Sablan,

Congratulations on introducing your first piece of legislation in the United States House of Representatives. It really is an historic and proud moment for the entire Commonwealth.

I am writing to you today to ask for your assistance in helping the Friends of the Monument build upon the success of President Bush's declaration of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument for the betterment of our economy, the educational opportunities for our children, and for the future of our islands.

Although the Monument Declaration was a great first step, it fell short of our expectations. The Friends of the Monument believe that opportunities exist to improve the existing monument to the benefit of everyone for now and for the future. In our original efforts, we envisioned co-management, sanctuary-type protections for the environment and more economic and educational benefits for the CNMI, including a visitor's center, enforcement resources, and jobs. It is our position that the Bush Administration missed a significant opportunity to help the people of the CNMI realize these aspirations as outlined in our Vision Statement (a copy of which is attached for your convenience). Like you, the Friends of the Monument has a responsibility to the people of the CNMI, who entrusted us to be their eyes, their ears, and their advocates for the best possible outcome in achieving a monument declaration.

Specifically, the Friends of the Monument have identified five "areas of concern" in which the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument could be improved:

1. The restrictions on activities within the monument are too weak to protect it, allowing recreational and commercial fishing in most areas. Other forms of fishing including sustenance, subsistence and traditional indigenous fishing are all undefined and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Wespac) is trying to define them in such a way as to open the entire monument up to fishing again. In our vision statement and today, we support fishing for

- cultural and traditional purposes within the monument and not other kinds of fishing.
2. The boundaries as we proposed were reduced in size, eliminating from the monument most of the waters north and northwest of Maug, Asuncion and Uracus. These are some of the most biologically and geologically unique and important areas identified by scientists for protection and research, including an area with the highest density of sharks left in the Pacific.
  3. The monument boundaries include federal waters around Guam, which offers federal agencies the option of putting the facilities and staff in Guam, not Saipan.
  4. The Department of the Interior agency with a role in managing the monument, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, is far less likely to construct a visitor's center for the monument or launch local educational programs than the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS).
  5. The Department of Commerce agency with the primary role in managing the resources of the monument is the National Marine Fisheries Service (and the controversial WESPAC), not the more protective and conservation-minded, education and visitor-focused ONMS.

Despite these challenges, the Friends of the Monument are dedicated to bringing to fruition the monument that we outlined in our Vision Statement and worked so hard for. Although the monument declaration as signed by President Bush is imperfect, we believe that there are a number of ways in which it can be improved to ensure the protection of this unique resource and increase the likelihood of economic and educational benefits reaching Saipan's shores, starting with the construction of a visitor's center.

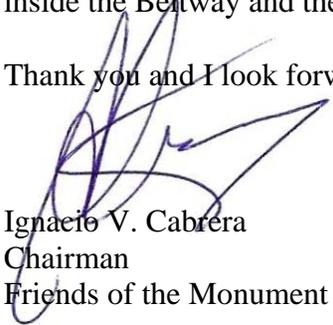
To improve the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, we request that you introduce legislation or amend H.R. 934 to include language that would: (1) transfer the monument to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries; (2) extend the existing boundaries to include the northern waters; and (3) close the entire monument to sustenance, commercial and recreational fishing (continuing to allow traditional indigenous fishing) as outlined in our Vision Statement. If you were to do that, the Marianas Trench National Marine Sanctuary would become the largest no-take marine reserve in the world, making the Commonwealth an international leader in ocean conservation and bringing us one-step closer to meeting the Micronesia Challenge.

Additionally, the Friends request that the state waters from 0-3 miles surrounding the islands of Uracus, Maug, and Asuncion remain a part of the monument, under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth, and co-managed with the rest of the monument by the Commonwealth and the Departments of Commerce and Interior.

With increased size and protections, the economic benefits as outlined in *The Economic Impact of a proposed Mariana Trench Marine National Monument* by Dr. Tom Iverson are much more likely to be obtained (a copy of the report is attached for your convenience).

To these ends, the Friends of the Monument encourage you to work with us and our partners in Washington, DC, the Pew Environment Group. Pew can be very influential inside the Beltway and their expertise may be helpful in assisting you and your staff.

Thank you and I look forward to your reply,



Ignacio V. Cabrera  
Chairman  
Friends of the Monument

cc: Nancy Sutley, CEQ