

DAVID VITTER
LOUISIANA

DEPUTY WHIP

Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Environment and Public Works

Foreign Relations

Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Special Committee on Aging

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

WASHINGTON, D.C.
HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
SUITE SH-516
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-4623
FAX: (202) 228-5061

BATON ROUGE
858 CONVENTION STREET
BATON ROUGE, LA 70802
(225) 383-0331
FAX: (225) 383-0952

Website with E-Mail Access:
vitter.senate.gov

October 23, 2007

The Honorable James Connaughton
Chairman
Council on Environmental Quality
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Chairman Connaughton:

I am writing to express my strong concern with a proposal currently being circulated within the Administration to establish a network of marine monuments offshore Louisiana and along the entire Gulf Coast. This designation could restrict recreational and commercial fishing and threaten our national energy security. The potential impact of these restrictions appears entirely contrary to our efforts to re-energize the economy of south Louisiana following the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

As you know, your staff has been in discussions with representatives from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and others to develop a plan to declare sizeable portions of the Gulf of Mexico a marine national monument under the Antiquities Act of 1906. I have serious concerns with the President attempting to use this authority to adversely affect recreational and commercial fishermen and to prevent energy production from safe, secure domestic sources without the benefit of public participation.

The Gulf of Mexico serves as the most important concentration of energy infrastructure in the world. An estimated 4000 of the world's 7000 offshore platforms are located in the Gulf. The infrastructure in this region is responsible for providing up to 30 percent of the energy consumed in the United States. As other states oppose and prevent domestic energy production, thereby increasing our dependence upon volatile foreign energy sources and causing price surges nationwide, the offshore areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas are literally fueling the economy of this nation – providing safe, secure domestic energy for all 50 states.

How would this proposal impact domestic offshore energy production?

In addition to serving as a vital energy supplier for the United States, the Gulf waters are home to some the most productive recreational and commercial fishing grounds in the country and this coastal area hosts a number of the nation's top port facilities. The 2005 hurricanes damaged or destroyed fishing and maritime infrastructure in Louisiana and Mississippi. Further, increasing restrictions on both recreational and commercial fishermen in recent years challenge these activities. The commercial industry also faces competition from subsidized foreign aquaculture operations and the unsustainable fishing practices of other nations. While I support the

ACADIANA
800 LAFAYETTE STREET
SUITE 1200
LAFAYETTE, LA 70501
(337) 262-6898
FAX: (337) 262-6373

CENTRAL LOUISIANA
2230 SOUTH MACARTHUR DRIVE
SUITE 4
ALEXANDRIA, LA 71301
(318) 448-0169
FAX: (318) 448-0189

NORTHEAST LOUISIANA
1217 NORTH 19TH STREET
MONROE, LA 71201
(318) 325-8120
FAX: (318) 325-9165

NORTHWEST LOUISIANA
920 PIERREMONT ROAD
SUITE 113
SHREVEPORT, LA 71106
(318) 861-0437
FAX: (318) 861-4865

SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA
2800 VETERANS BOULEVARD
SUITE 201
METAIRIE, LA 70002
(504) 589-2753
FAX: (504) 589-2607

SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA
3221 RYAN STREET
SUITE E
LAKE CHARLES, LA 70601
(337) 436-0453
FAX: (337) 436-3163

protection of important natural resources under the right conditions, any designation in these Gulf waters requires careful consideration and public discussion.

Would marine monument designations include restrictions on recreational and commercial fishing? If so, please explain. Would navigation and ports be affected by a marine monument designation?

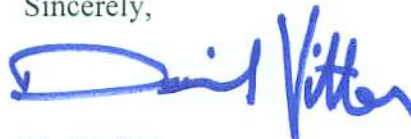
The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (Papahānaumokuākea) Marine National Monument designation in 2006 had the benefit of “over 100 meetings and working group sessions open to the public – including 22 formal public hearings – generating over 52,000 comments.” Comparatively, the White House has not consulted with Congress on the creation of Gulf of Mexico marine monuments and has not engaged the public on this important decision. The implications of this decision are far too serious for this nation to circumvent this important consultation and public process.

What steps have been taken to engage the public on this designation?

The time remaining for this Administration is likely not sufficient to thoroughly consider the impacts and develop a consensus proposal reflecting these concerns.

I strongly urge you to refrain from taking further unilateral action on a Gulf of Mexico Marine National Monument at this time. This time and resources could be better invested on more urgent needs such as repairing and improving our flood and hurricane protection systems, restoring our fishery infrastructure and habitat, protecting our coast and restoring the 217 square miles of land lost during the two hurricanes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Vitter". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "D" and a cursive "Vitter".

David Vitter
U.S. Senator