

June 10, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We wish to express our serious concern over the potential designation of marine protected areas in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. South Atlantic Ocean and the Central Pacific Ocean. While we understand that such designations are meant to enhance conservation efforts, they stand to do irreparable harm to the sport of fishing.

For over a century, recreational fishing has been allowed and encouraged in national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, and even in wilderness areas unless it had been determined that fishing is harmful to the environment. This is a management concept that we steadfastly support.

However, the designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Marine Monument failed to incorporate that longstanding management policy. In making this designation it was assumed that recreational fishing was harmful to the environment. We disagree and are gravely concerned that future designations will reaffirm this new standard established by the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands designation.

Alternatively, we would strongly support any new effort that engages in a designation process that includes a robust, science-based, public comment process that provides for the meaningful participation of recreational anglers, boaters and sportsmen, and recognizes the needs and contributions of these user groups.

Mr. President, we respectfully urge you to not take any action that would establish additional marine protected areas in U.S. waters that bypasses the aforementioned designation process and potentially and unnecessarily diminishes recreational fishing opportunity.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
BASS/ESPN Outdoors
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
International Game Fish Association
National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses
National Marine Manufacturers Association
The Billfish Foundation

cc: Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne
Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez