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Arnold I. Palacios
Governor

David M. Apatang
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

February 4, 2023

GOV 2023-363

Mr. John Armor, Director
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Removing the Mariana Trench from the ONMS inventory list

Hafa Adai and Tirow Mr. Armor,

As the newly elected Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), I wish to follow up on the previous administration's request for the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) to remove the Mariana Trench nomination from the sanctuary inventory list.

The second public comment period deadline ended on April 25, 2022 and it has been over 9 months without a decision by ONMS to retain or remove the Mariana Trench from the inventory list. I believe the CNMI has made it very clear that they do not support the Mariana Trench nomination package.

In 2017, as Lieutenant Governor, I was not supportive with the initial proposal to create a Marianas Trench Sanctuary. I have these same concerns today as Governor and would appreciate if the ONMS would remove the Mariana Trench Sanctuary from the inventory list.

Sincerely,


Arnold I. Palacios
Governor

- cc: The Honorable Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan, Delegate, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Lou Leon Guerrero, Governor of Guam
Chelsa Muna-Brecht, Director, Guam Department of Agriculture
Sylvan Igisomar, Acting Secretary, CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources
Manny Pangelinan, Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife
L. Hoku Ka'aekuahiwi Pousima, Policy Analyst PIR, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Regional Fish. Management Council