



**Western  
Pacific  
Regional  
Fishery  
Management  
Council**

March 22, 2022

John Armor  
Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
National Ocean Service  
1305 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear John,

At the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council's (Council) 190<sup>th</sup> meeting held virtually on March 22-24, 2022, Council members heard a presentation on the status of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' (ONMS) five-year nomination review of the proposal for a Marianas Trench National Monument Sanctuary. Concerns regarding limited outreach and confusion about the nomination and the review process were echoed by both Guam and CNMI members. After discussion, **the Council requests NOAA to remove the Mariana Trench from the Inventory list and assist the nominator in developing a revised nomination package that would be properly vetted through the CNMI and Guam communities.**

As the Council previously commented in the nomination review public comment period, it believes that the existing Mariana Trench Marine National Monument (MTMNM) management plan should be given a chance to be implemented as it may already provide the protection that the nomination is seeking. Many of the concerns listed in the proposed sanctuary nomination, including education, research, and economic development can be addressed in the current MTMNM management plan and with existing partner agencies. Fishery regulations for domestic fisheries are in place and foreign fishing is prohibited by law. If the primary concerns in the nomination are regarding fisheries in the water column above the submerged lands or outside of the current MTMNM boundaries, existing management structures, including the Council's Mariana Archipelago Fishery Ecosystem Plan, are able to respond to those concerns right now.

Due to the confusion that exists in the Mariana communities with respect to the 5-year sanctuary review, **the Council further requests ONMS to provide the Council and fishing community with the efficacy and accomplishments of the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument since its designation.** The information on the MTMNM and what affect it had on conservation in the Mariana Archipelago may help to delineate the role of the monument versus that of a National Marine Sanctuary.

Thank you for your attention to the Council's request and Council staff is available to discuss these issues further with you at your availability. We hope that together the fishing

communities in the Mariana Archipelago are able to develop a better understanding of the request for conservation while preserving their traditional and economic opportunities in fisheries. If you have any questions, please contact me at the Council Office at (808) 522-8220.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kitty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kitty M. Simonds  
Executive Director

cc: Kristina Kekuewa, Regional Director-Pacific Islands Region  
Mariana Archipelago Council Members  
Congressman Michael San Nicolas  
Congressman Gregorio Sablan  
Friends of the Mariana Trench Monument  
Angelo Villagomez