



David M. Apatang
Governor

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Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOV2025-056

Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Hafa adai and Tirow,

On behalf of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), I write to respectfully request your Administration to restore fishing rights in our ancestral waters under the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). As I am sure you are aware, fishing is an integral part of Pacific Island culture and tradition, and has been for hundreds of years. As such, we have an innate understanding of the importance in supporting sustainable fishing as we rely on our marine resources to feed our communities.

In 2009, the Bush Administration unilaterally took away our commercial fishing rights over a 12,388 nm² of marine waters for the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument (MTMNM). This area, designated as the "Islands Unit", encompasses a 0 – 50 nm zone surrounding the northern-most islands of Uracus, Maug, and Asuncion. With our strong cultural ties to the ocean, this federal action was an affront to the indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian peoples.

One of the many federal promises made as a condition of the monument designation was to support Congressional action to convey ownership of 0 - 3 miles of submerged lands surrounding each island in the Northern Marianas to the CNMI Government. This promise was addressed when Congress amended Public Law 93-435 with Public Law 113-34.

However, due to the MTMNM, President Obama issued Proclamation 9077 that excepted from transfer the 0 – 3 miles of submerged lands surrounding the islands of Uracus, Maug, and Asuncion (e.g., the "Islands Unit") to the CNMI Government. As with the monument designation, the Mariana communities again felt betrayed.

In an effort to appease the CNMI, a conveyance document was signed in 2016 between the DOI Secretary and CNMI Governor (e.g., Patent Number 201-1) that provided the CNMI a "reserved easement" over the 0-3 submerged lands surrounding Uracus, Maug, and Asuncion. Although touted

as a return of submerged lands to the CNMI, the CNMI Government received no ownership rights as these submerged lands must be managed in accordance to the monument conservation guidelines.

In conclusion, I am respectfully requesting the return of MSA management authority over fishing activities in the Islands Unit of the MTMNM. This management system was working well prior to marine monument designation in 2009. Additionally, I also request for the unencumbered ownership of the 0-3 miles of submerged lands surrounding Uracus, Maug, and Asuncion be conveyed to the CNMI as originally promised by the federal government.

Sincerely,



DAVID M. APATANG

Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Cc: Hon. Howard Lutnick, Secretary of Commerce
Hon. Doug Burgam, Secretary of the Interior
Sylvan Igisomar, Secretary, CNMI Dept. of Lands & Natural Resources
Ms. Kimberly King-Hinds, U.S. Representative, U.S. House of Representatives, CNMI
Ms. Kitty Simonds, Executive Director, WPRFMC
Dennis James C. Mendiola, CNMI Lieutenant Governor