

RESOLUTION of the
Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

To forward a joint letter of support for the designation of a national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands

At its meeting on April 21, 2023, the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary (GFNMS) Advisory Council passed a resolution to send a joint letter (with the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council) expressing support for the designation of a national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands and requested that GFNMS Superintendent, Maria Brown, submit the letter to Regulations.gov Docket Number NOAA–NOS–2023–0052 as a public comment on behalf of the advisory councils.

Attachments: Letter of Support for the Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands

This resolution was passed with majority vote by a quorum of primary members (or alternate members serving in place of primary members) at a public meeting on April 21, 2023 held in Sausalito, CA and via Google Meet. Council discussion regarding this resolution can be found in Meeting Highlights documentation at https://farallones.noaa.gov/manage/sac_meetings.html.

The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings of this letter/publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the sanctuary and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Letter of Support for the Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands

April 21, 2023

Maria Brown,
Sanctuary Superintendent

Dear Superintendent Brown,

In 2023, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced its initiating the process to consider designating the submerged lands and waters surrounding the Pacific Remote Islands to the full extent of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as a new national marine sanctuary. NOAA is beginning the process to create a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and engagement with the public, stakeholders, state agencies, and federally recognized nations and tribes to designate 770,000 square miles marine areas within the existing Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, as well as those currently unprotected submerged lands and waters.

The Advisory Councils of the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries support the establishment of a national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands on the following grounds:

1. The proposed sanctuary would help to protect the atolls, shoals, banks, reefs, seamounts, and open-ocean waters surrounding the Pacific Remote Islands, which are home to some of the most diverse and remarkable tropical marine life on the planet, but are becoming increasingly vulnerable to impacts from climate change, invasive species, and marine debris. The protections a sanctuary designation would provide to the region's diverse habitats and many species of marine life are invaluable. Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef support higher levels of coral diversity (180 to 190 species) within lower latitude waters, which are underrepresented within national marine sanctuaries, than any other atoll or reef island in the central Pacific. Numerous threatened, endangered, and depleted species thrive in the area, including green and hawksbill sea turtles, pearl oysters, giant clams, oceanic whitetip sharks, humphead (Maori) wrasse, bumphead parrotfish, spinner dolphins, and melon-headed whales.
2. By virtue of its designation as a sanctuary, the PRINMS would strengthen and increase the long-term protections already existing in the Monument and cannot diminish them. Sanctuary designation would provide another layer of protection to continue conserving and honoring this place. This designation would prevent the moving, removing, recovering, altering, destroying, possessing or otherwise injuring of sanctuary resources.
3. The proposed sanctuary would honor the ancestral, historical, and cultural connections to the Pacific Remote Islands and the surrounding open-ocean waters and recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge, language, stories, and cultural connections between

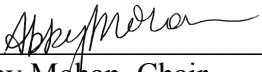
lands, waters, and peoples, and celebrate distinct cultures. Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Carolinian, and many other Pacific Island Indigenous Peoples, have voyaged across this vast expanse of the Central and Western Pacific Ocean over thousands of years, interpreting the stars, winds, and currents with great skill and proficiency to settle new areas, engage in trade and commerce, and exchange knowledge and cultures among distant communities.

4. Threats to these very remote areas are global threats that require global action, and the National Marine Sanctuary system provides a voice to tell the story of these underrepresented special places.

The Advisory Councils of the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries recommend that the Pacific Remote Islands be designated a national marine sanctuary.

Sincerely,

Chairpersons of the Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries Advisory Councils



Abby Mohan, Chair
Greater Farallones National Marine
Sanctuary Advisory Council



Kai Martin, Chair
Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary
Advisory Council

The councils are an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings of this letter/publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the sanctuaries and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.