

Alaska Wilderness League • America Verde • Azul • Chukchi Sea Watch • Clean Air Task Force • Defenders of Wildlife • Earthjustice • Environment America • Eyak Preservation Council • Green Latinos • Hispanic Federation • League of Conservation Voters • League of Women Voters • National Hispanic Medical Association • Natural Resources Defense Council • NextGen Climate • REDOIL • Wilderness Society • Sierra Club • Voces Verdes

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

January 12, 2017

Dear President Obama:

We write to thank you, on behalf of our millions of members and activists, our staffs, and ourselves, for your extraordinary decisions to protect and keep safe for future generations precious, vulnerable, and unspoiled marine areas in our publicly owned Arctic and Atlantic Oceans.

On December 20, 2016, you dramatically redrew the map of ocean conservation by permanently withdrawing 98% of the United States' Arctic Ocean and 31 massive, vitally important marine canyons off the Atlantic coast from the harms and threats of any oil and gas development. Fossil fuels from these waters, among the most pristine we have left, could not have been delivered for decades after inclusion in a leasing program. They had no rational place in any national energy strategy that reduces use of and investment in dirty fuels fast enough to avoid catastrophic climate damage to human health and the environment. Allowing exploration, let alone development, of these waters would have been all risk and no possible reward for the public.

This gift to the American people bolsters a legacy that has no parallel in the history of marine conservation. You have come to the rescue of hard-pressed, irreplaceable ocean and shoreline resources, provided vital havens for marine mammals and fisheries, stood up for coastal residents and business owners wholly dependent on the health of nearby waters, provided vast recreation opportunities for this and coming generations, and – in a precedent-setting act of climate leadership – helped guide long-term energy investment away from the carbon pollution that poses such an urgent threat to the world's oceans.

These are the acts of a visionary President and a dedicated, effective public servant of the highest order. Thank you.

With enduring gratitude,

Rhea Suh
President
Natural Resources Defense Council

Tom Steyer
Founder
NextGen Climate

Faith Gemmill
Executive Director
REDOIL

Carol Hoover
Executive Director
Eyak Preservation Council

Cindy Shogan
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