

Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument

Background Info and Support

On September 15, 2016, President Obama [created](#) the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument.

Where is this area?

4,913 square miles
150 miles off Cape Cod

Political and Public Support:

Political Support:

Members of Congress:

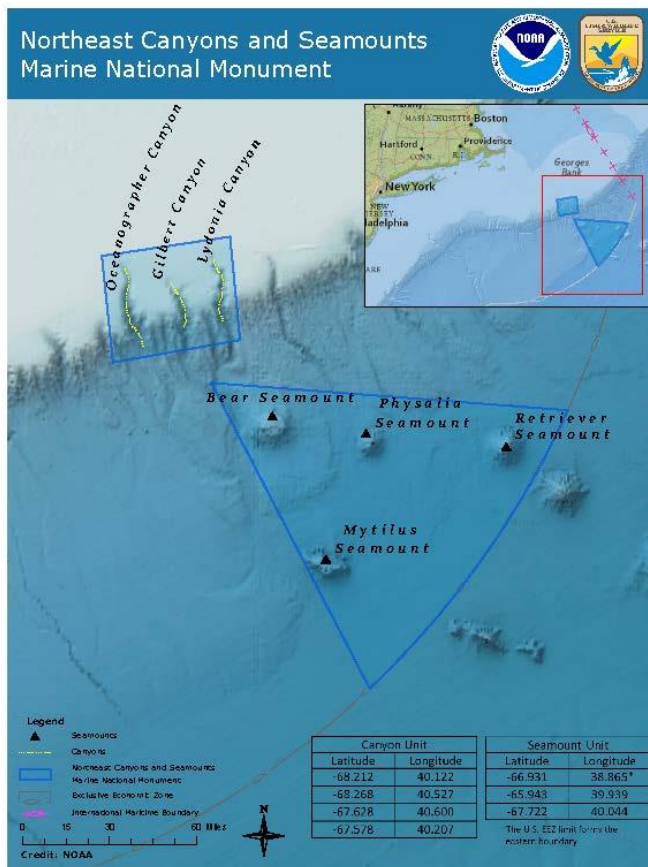
On August 4, 2016, Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and the entire Connecticut delegation [released a proposal](#) for protecting a series of canyons, and four seamounts in New England waters. The delegation asked the President to use his authority under the Antiquities Act to designate these areas as a marine national monument, due to their important biological diversity and relatively pristine condition.

Local elected officials:

Maine: 20 members and former members of the House and Senate.
New Hampshire: 2 members of the House and 1 State Senator wrote individual letters.
Massachusetts: 18 members of the House and 1 State Senator.
Rhode Island: 18 members of the House.

Public Support:

- On **September 3, 2015**, NOAA initiated a [public comment period](#) asking for comments on a proposed monument for three canyons and four seamounts. Since then, over **300,000 signatures from U.S. residents** have been collected and delivered to the Administration. An additional 2,500 people have hand-written comment cards and signed petitions in person.
- On September 15, 2015, NOAA held a **town hall meeting in Providence, Rhode Island** that was attended by over 300 people, at which 65 people gave verbal public comment.



- Two additional meetings have been held, one on September 2, 2015 at the New England Aquarium in Massachusetts and one on August 30, 2016 at the Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut. These were attended by over 750 supporters of the New England monument.
- In the spring of 2016, and again in early fall of 2016, **Administration officials traveled to New England** and met privately with fishing industry representatives, environmental organizations, and other local stakeholders.
- Additionally, all stakeholders including the fishing industry and others have continued to have **opportunities to meet with and speak to Administration officials in person in DC** and elsewhere, with input encouraged.

Why this area is special:

- Scientists agree that this area is an important and unique place for marine life in the U.S. Atlantic. One a year ago, **145 marine scientists signed a letter** asking for the Canyons and Seamounts area to be a marine monument. In early 2016, marine biologists from New England Aquarium and Mystic Aquarium conducted [new analyses on these areas](#), and found them to **be significantly important and of great scientific interest** for deep-sea corals and marine mammals, and for their unique geological features.
- New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts features:
 - o **Canyons** that cut into the continental shelf, some deeper than the Grand Canyon.
 - o **Seamounts**, the only such underwater mountains in the U.S. Atlantic, which rise thousands of feet from the ocean floor.
- The ecosystems here are rare, diverse, and **highly sensitive to disturbance**. They are home to fragile and ancient deep-sea corals, some over a thousand years old, which may never recover if damaged by human activities.
- These habitats support **abundant marine life**, including deep sea corals and sponges, tuna, sea turtles, seabirds, deep sea fishes and sharks, and a high diversity of marine mammals.
- This is the **first marine national monument in the U.S. Atlantic** or off the continental U.S. All of our country's other marine monuments are in the U.S. Pacific, in remote island areas.

Why it should be protected:

- This area is very **pristine and ecologically intact**, and data show that the Canyons and Seamounts are among the least fished areas in the region.
- Removing stresses connected with commercial resource extraction increases the chance that these ecosystems will be able to **cope with the pressures caused by climate change**.
- There are no large protected areas in the Atlantic Ocean, which scientists indicate are important to build marine resilience to climate change impacts.
- While this area encompasses about **1.5% of U.S. federal waters along the East Coast**, protecting it will make a large contribution to the overall health and productivity of the Atlantic, with a minimal economic cost.
- As human activities reach deeper and deeper into the sea, it is important to have places that serve as **reservoirs of the genetic diversity**, which could allow species to survive a

changing climate. Protected places can serve as reference areas for how ecosystems function in the absence of human disturbance.

- Species in protected areas spread beyond their borders to **repopulate nearby areas**.
- Protecting these marine resources can support New England's economy, including tourism, which benefits from healthy ocean ecosystems. **Ocean tourism and recreation supports 170,000 jobs and \$7.4 billion** in economic activity in New England coastal states.
- Special places on land and in the ocean are our heritage, and our ocean resources belong to all Americans. We have an **obligation to ensure the next generations** can enjoy them.
- The area is close to some of the most densely-populated urban areas in our country, within **a few hundred miles from 25 million people** who live in coastal counties from Maine to New York, nearly 10 percent of the U.S. population.
- Without protection, the area would be at risk of future damage from mounting offshore industrial activity including expansion of commercial fishing, drilling and mining.

New England Poll Results:

- A recent poll of a representative sample of Massachusetts and Rhode Island residents, conducted in June 2016, showed **78% of people polled support permanently protecting New England's Canyons and Seamounts**.
- **Support is bipartisan** – for every question, a majority across political affiliations supported the permanent protection of this area.

Additional Support from Diverse Stakeholders:

Fishing: 17 recreational fishermen have demonstrated public support.

Businesses: Over 100 businesses throughout New England have signed several letters, including technology companies, restaurants, dive, surf and kayak shops, and whale watch operators.

Faith-based leaders:

22 religious leaders from Connecticut signed a letter in July 2016.

34 religious leaders from Rhode Island signed a letter in July 2016.

24 religious leaders signed a letter in April 2016.

35 religious leaders attended a meeting and ceremony in Providence on March 12, 2016.

29 faith-based organizations and religious leaders signed a letter in September 2015.

Whale watch and marine mammal research: 10 whale watch operators and marine mammal organizations have written letters of support.

National and regional organizations (representing millions of people):

50 organizations, including all major, national-level ocean conservation groups.

10 aquariums signed a letter of support in June 2016.

Tribes: Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians wrote a letter of support.

Dive clubs: 6 regional dive clubs wrote letters of support.

Media Clips through August 2016

August 21: Hartford Courant (news article by Gregory Hladky)
August 16: The Hill (blog by David Helvarg)
August 16: Hartford Courant (letter from Stephen Sinacore)
August 15: Huffington Post (blog from David Yarnold)
August 14: CapeCod.com (news article by Justin Saunders)
August 11: Hartford Courant (letter from Taylor Lapnow)
August 11: Hartford Courant (letter from Rev. Tom Carr)
August 11: Hartford Courant (letter from Taylor Ingraham)
August 8: Westerly Sun (news article by Brooke Constance White)
August 5: Hartford Courant and Los Angeles Times (news article by Greg Hladky)
August 5: EcoNewsNetwork (news article without attribution / byline)
August 4: Greenwire/E&E (news article by Emily Yehle)
August 4: The Hill (news article by Tim Cama)
August edition: National Fisherman (chairman's letter by Daniel Hildreth)
July 30: The Day (news article by Joe Wojtas)
July 20: Providence Business News (news article by Emily Gowdey-Backus)
July 19: Soundbite Services (news article & audio story by Mary Kuhlman; picked up in multiple outlets)
July 18: Public News Service (news article & audio story by Mike Clifford)
July 14: WGBH, NPR affiliate in Boston (news article & audio story by Heather Goldstone)
July 14: WCAI, NPR affiliate for the Cape and Islands (news article & audio story by Heather Goldstone)
July 13: Mental Floss (news article by Kate Horowitz)
July 12: Greenwire/E&E (news article by Emily Yehle)
July 11: PR Newswire (news release; picked up in multiple outlets)
July 11: Associated Press (news article by Jennifer McDermott, AP Rhode Island)
June 30: Warwick Beacon (letter from Barbara Scott)
June 17: New York Times (editorial)
June 2: South Coast Today / New Bedford Standard Times (news article by Mike Lawrence)
May 19: New Haven Register (op-ed from Stephen Coan)
May 15: South Coast Today (letter from Berl Hartman)
May 13: Rhode Island Public Radio (news article by Ambar Espinoza)
May 12: Gloucester Daily Times (letter from Peter Shelley)
May 9: Boston Globe (op-ed from Derrick Jackson)
April 26: Huffington Post Green (blog from Peter Neill)
April 1: WGBH Boston (news article by Heather Goldstone)
April 1: Cape Cod Times (news article by Doug Fraser)
March 30: National Geographic (news article by Brian Clark Howard)
March 29: Associated Press (news article by Patrick Whittle, AP Maine)
March 29: New Haven Register (news article by Anna Bisaro)
March 30: WNPR Connecticut Public Radio (news article by Patrick Skahill)
March 29: Seacoast Online (news article by Elizabeth Dinan)

March 31: Headlines and Global News (news article by Catherine Arnold)
March 19: Providence Journal (op-ed from Rev. Don Anderson)
March 12: Providence Journal (news article by Andy Smith)
February 17: Associated Press (news article by Patrick Whittle, AP Maine)
January: National Fisherman (op-ed from Peter Shelley)