



Northern Chumash Tribal Council

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Chairman Bruce Westerman
House Natural Resources Committee
202 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Jared Huffman
House Natural Resources Committee
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

January 21, 2025

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman,

We write to express our opposition to legislative efforts under consideration by the House Natural Resources Committee, to amend the National Marine Sanctuary Act to prohibit requiring an authorization for the installation, operation, maintenance, repair, or recovery of undersea fiber optic cables in a national marine sanctuary if such activities have previously been authorized by a Federal or State agency.

The National Marine Sanctuary Act exists to protect marine resources and the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, cultural and historical connections, and economic productivity of our most precious underwater treasures. It grants authority to the NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to fulfill its mandate.

In waiving all NOAA requirements for undersea fiber optic cables, this bill would weaken the authority of the agency charged with protecting and conserving special areas of the ocean and Great Lakes through the management of a network of National Marine Sanctuaries—areas considered to be of irreplaceable national significance—from the permitting process.

The passage of this legislation would not only weaken the National Marine Sanctuary Act but also set a dangerous precedent to eliminate NOAA's role in evaluating the impact of an industrial activity within a National Marine Sanctuary, undermining the ability to ensure the proper care and management of sanctuary resources.

Keeping this authority within the hands of NOAA could also help each sanctuary continue educating the public about the marine environment and promoting responsible stewardship of these underwater treasures while allowing for compatible recreational and commercial activities.

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In short, we believe NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries needs to maintain a role in authorizing industrial activities within the boundaries of a National Marine Sanctuary to ensure alignment with and maintenance of its conservation mission.

We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Violet Sage Walker
Chairwoman
Northern Chumash Tribal Council