



August 15, 2017

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Secretary of Commerce
Hon. Wilbur Ross
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Ross,

Thank you for undertaking a review of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine Monument enacted by President Obama in 2016. Seafreeze Ltd. is a family-owned fishing company based in Rhode Island. We own and operate two fishing vessels that freeze at sea, as well as a shore-based dealer facility, and are the largest producer and trader of sea frozen fish on the U.S. East Coast. Our vessels have fished in the area now designated as the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Monument since the 1980s, and derive a considerable amount of our annual revenue from that area. The Monument area is our place of business, and since losing access to our historic fishing grounds there in 2016, our vessels and business have financially suffered as a result.

We participate extensively in the Regional Fishery Management Council process, as established through the Magnuson Stevens Act. This process requires certain scientific thresholds for fishery management decisions, as well as economic analysis, policy standards, and other legal requirements necessary for good decision making. Executive use of the Antiquities Act to unilaterally close productive, historic fishing grounds and overrule a legally required public fishery management process is unacceptable and threatens the future financial stability of our business. We cannot have a business plan for the future if our historic fishing grounds, and therefore sources of income, can be taken away without warning at any given moment.

On May 17, 2016, we testified to this before the House Committee on Natural Resources as the potential for a Marine Monument on our fishing grounds was ongoing. See our oral and written comments at <https://naturalresources.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=400425> and https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_lapp.pdf. We also published an editorial in the September 2016 Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association Newsletter, highlighting the scientific and factual inaccuracies with pro-Monument claims. See page 22 at http://lobstermen.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/MLA_WEB_September2016.pdf; hard copy attached. Despite any factual evidence or any due process, the Monument designation was made and our vessels were forced to leave the area.

Commercial fishing in the United States is a highly regulated industry that supports thousands of jobs and communities coast-wide. It is also an important food source for our nation. It is a disservice to those who economically rely on this resource to strip them of their source of income, as well as to remove a food source from the people of the United States. We respectfully request that the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Monument be removed and our historic fishing grounds restored.

Sincerely,

Meghan Lapp
Fisheries Liaison, Seafreeze, Ltd.