

Honorable Chairman Dan Sullivan, Honorable Ranking Member Gary Peters, Members of the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard and all Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation:

Marine life and the essential ecological services oceans provide are increasingly threatened by a variety of human activities. Marine scientists recognize the important role that strongly-protected marine reserves play in safeguarding marine life. In 2001, the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis outlined the striking ecological benefits for marine life within and outside of strongly-protected reserves and the effects of ecological networks in its "Scientific Consensus Statement on Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas" (Appendix 1).

Since then, extensive scientific literature has provided additional compelling evidence that strongly-protected marine reserves are powerful ways of conserving biodiversity. In addition, strongly-protected reserves can create jobs and bring in new economic revenue through ecotourism and enhancement of local fisheries through spillover beyond reserve boundaries. Finally, strongly-protected reserves provide resilience against the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification. Whereas the unprotected ocean is like a debit account where everybody withdraws and nobody deposits, marine reserves are like savings accounts that produce interest we can live off.

In light of the growing impacts that humans are having on our marine ecosystems and the fisheries they support, we, the undersigned scientists, call on the United States government to maintain existing ocean protections and to increase protections for diverse habitats across all biogeographic regions of U.S. ocean waters. Strongly-protected reserves will help provide the resilience needed to ensure the continued health and productivity of America's oceans.

Sincerely,

Enric Sala, PhD National Geographic Society

Sylvia Earle, PhD Mission Blue and National Geographic Society

Paul Dayton, PhD University of California San Diego

Oran Young, PhD Bren School University of California Santa Barbara

Daniel Pauly, PhD University of British Columbia

Steve Murray, PhD California State University Fullerton

Ellen K. Pikitch, PhD Stony Brook University

Callum Roberts, PhD University of York

Elliott Norse, PhD Marine Conservation Institute

Rashid Sumaila, PhD University of British Columbia

Carl Safina, PhD The Safina Center (formerly Blue Ocean Institute)

Stuart Pimm, PhD Duke University