



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

April 15, 2021

Mr. David Witherell
Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
1007 West 3rd Avenue, Suite 400
Anchorage, AK 99501

Dear Mr. Witherell:

Thank you for your letter expressing your interest in the Biden Administration's commitment to conserve 30 percent of the Nation's lands and waters by 2030 (30x30), as stated in Executive Order 14008. Input from state and tribal governments, stakeholder groups, and the public is essential to the success of this initiative.

The Administration has not yet determined what types of conservation will count toward the 30x30 goal. An interagency process on 30x30 is being led by the Department of the Interior, in close coordination with the Council on Environmental Quality, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Decisions regarding definitions or criteria for what to include or how to appropriately track progress will not be made until public comments are fully considered. A robust public process is anticipated to launch after the 90-day report required under the Executive Order is submitted, which will recommend "... steps that the United States should take, working with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments, agricultural and forest landowners, fishermen, and other key stakeholders, to achieve the goal."

Your letter also expressed concerns about the NOAA Marine Protected Areas Center's definition of protected areas in the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Inventory. The rationale for using the current definition is that it aligns MPA data from the United States with global definitions to ensure comparability with multinational databases and reporting. Using the International Union for Conservation of Nature definition facilitates the U.S. ability to engage in the international arena on place-based management.

NOAA recognizes that both fisheries management and MPAs are essential tools for the conservation of a healthy ocean. We welcome a discussion with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council on its views regarding the inclusion of areas off Alaska in ProtectedSeas.net or the MPA Inventory, as well as its views on characterization of these areas. Please contact Lauren Wenzel, Director of the National Marine Protected Areas Center, at lauren.wenzel@noaa.gov to further discuss these issues.

Mr. David Witherell

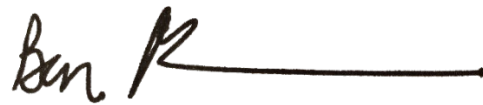
THE ADMINISTRATOR



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We appreciate your continued interest and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's proactive approach to fisheries management. We look forward to working with you on our shared conservation efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Friedman". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Ben" and the last name "Friedman" clearly visible. A horizontal line extends from the end of the signature to the right.

Benjamin Friedman
Deputy Under Secretary for Operations
Performing the Duties of Under Secretary
of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator