



COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOV22-202

October 18, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.
President
The United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Hafa Adai and Tirow! I write to express the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' support of the Honorable Governor of American Samoa, Lemanu P.S. Mauga, in his opposition to the proposed expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM).

In addition, we also agree with the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council that further expansion of the PRIMNM will have multiple unintended consequences that will affect U.S. Fishing Vessels and adversely damage the American Samoa Economy. This proposed expansion is not scientifically supported, counters international management of open ocean marine resources, and failed to properly evaluate long-term conservation and socioeconomic impacts as U.S. fishing is supplanted by foreign fishing.

We are very familiar with how vulnerable American economies like ours, remote from the mainland United States, can be significantly affected by factors beyond our control, such as natural disasters, health pandemics, and the economic losses experienced by our regional commercial partners.

Furthermore, we also agree that the U.S. Pacific Island community should not carry the full conservation burden of the country under the "America the Beautiful" Initiative outlined in Executive Order 14008. The proposal for the expansion of the PRIMNM states that it will ensure over 30% of the national conservation goal under America the Beautiful. However, this would counter Sec. 219 of Executive Order 14008 and Executive Order 13985 by failing to secure an equitable future and advancing equity for historically underserved Pacific Island communities by denying economic opportunities for those communities.

Lastly, this past month, we were visited by NOAA staffers who spoke widely of Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ). This expansion runs counter to EEJ principles by putting a highly disproportionate burden for the nation's conservation goals on U.S. Pacific Islands territories. The proposed expansion would only exacerbate EEJ issues already created by the original establishment of the PRIMNM and the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument.

The CNMI stands with American Samoa and Guam on this critical issue and to support the fishery aspirations of all U.S. Pacific Island territories.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ralph DLG Torres', written over a circular stamp or seal.

RALPH DLG TORRES

Governor

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

cc: Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council