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*James Sinclair*

U.S. Coast Guard

*LCDR Jason Brand*

NOAA Fisheries

*Rusty Swafford*

NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

*Charles Tyer*

October 30, 2012

The Honorable Rebecca Blank  
Acting Secretary of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dr. Jane Lubchenco  
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans  
And Atmosphere  
NOAA Administrator  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

RE: National Marine Sanctuaries Site Evaluation List Reactivation

Dear Acting Secretary Blank and Dr. Lubchenco,

The NOAA Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is writing to request that the Site Evaluation List (SLE) be reopened so that communities with an interest in sanctuary designation may have the opportunity to determine the best method for protection of vital living marine and maritime heritage resources.

The SEL provides a starting point for public conversations about options for creating a national marine sanctuary off their coast. Many communities around the county have expressed a desire to explore national marine sanctuary designation for the conservation of resources with potential significance to their region and the Nation, such as the North Atlantic right whale and deepwater coral reefs

The National Marine Sanctuaries Act provides thorough and comprehensive benefits as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) seeks to fulfill its mandate to protect nationally significant and ecologically important marine areas. This tool is particularly critical as states and communities plan activities and development for marine and coastal areas.

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council  
4700 Avenue U, Bldg. 216 \* Galveston, TX 77551  
409-621-5151 \* 409-621-1316 fax  
<http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>

An active SEL not only benefits FGBNMS, the GOM and our local communities, but communities across the country. Activation of the Site Evaluation List is a critical link in the process communities can use to evaluate the significance of resources along with their economic and conservation values, and to provide public comment and input on suggested sanctuary sites to enhance these values.

Thank you for your consideration and support

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. McKinney', with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Larry McKinney  
Chair, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council  
Director, Hart Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies  
Corpus Christi, TX