August 15, 2014

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we thank you for your commitment to expand the current Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. As the nation with the largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the world, it is incumbent on the United States to be a global leader in protecting our oceans. We urge you to expand the monument, and all its protections from extractive activities, to the full 200-nautical mile limit of U.S. jurisdiction. Your leadership will ensure that we conserve one of the world’s last frontiers and havens for ocean wildlife and one of the richest collections of coral reef, seabird, and shorebird areas under any single nation’s jurisdiction.

The five interconnected protected areas that make up the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument and the waters around them are an ecological treasure unlike anything else in the U.S. They are some of the richest areas on Earth for sea life, and some of the least disturbed. They are of global and regional importance for large predatory fishes, seabirds, marine mammals and turtles. Expanding the boundary of the monument out to 200 nautical miles provides protection for an entire ecosystem, from near shore to the deep sea.

The expanded monument would protect a treasure trove of unique and irreplaceable natural resources including:

- Almost 250 seamounts, or undersea mountains—the majority of which are unexplored;
- Large numbers of new marine species yet to be discovered;
An estimated 14 million seabirds representing 19 species that use these areas as feeding and breeding grounds, including the endangered Phoenix Petrel and the near-threatened Black-footed Albatross;

- Important habitat for protected species of sea turtles and marine mammals, like the Leatherback and Green sea turtle species, as well as the Sei Whale and Blue Whale; and

- Remarkably rich coral ecosystems, with the oldest corals up to 5,000 years old.

These areas are immensely valuable to science and to our understanding of how healthy marine environments function. In the view of government experts who have studied them, they also represent the last refuge for many fish and wildlife species that are rapidly vanishing from the planet.

There is relentless pressure for extractive activities even in the most distant places under U.S. jurisdiction. Fully protecting these remote ocean wilderness areas, with their rich biodiversity and unexplored beauty, is an opportunity to ensure that they are not lost forever. Research shows that fully protected marine reserves are essential to rebuilding species abundance and diversity, and increasing resilience to climate change. Hundreds of leading scientists agree that fully protected—or “no-take”—reserves are a powerful tool for reversing the decline of the marine environment and restoring it to health.

Again, we thank you for your passion and commitment to ocean conservation. If you expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument out to the full extent of U.S. jurisdiction, you will leave an important legacy for future generations of Americans.

Very truly yours,

American Bird Conservancy  
Blue Frontier  
The Campbell Foundation  
Center for American Progress  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Code Blue Foundation  
Conservation International  
Conservation Law Foundation  
EarthJustice  
Earth Trust  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Greenpeace  
Humane Society International  
Humane Society of the United States  
International Fund for Animal Welfare  
League of Conservation Voters  
Marine Conservation Institute  
National Aquarium  
National Geographic Society  
National Marine Mammal Foundation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  

National Wildlife Federation  
New England Aquarium  
Ocean Connectors  
Oceana  
Ocean Conservancy  
Oceans Five  
The Ocean Foundation  
PangeaSeed  
The Pew Charitable Trusts  
San Diego Coast Keepers  
Sierra Club  
The Summit Charitable Foundation, Inc.  
The Surfrider Foundation  
The Tiffany & Company Foundation  
Waitt Foundation  
Waitt Institute  
The Walton Family Foundation  
Waterkeeper Alliance  
World Wildlife Fund U.S.