

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

CC: Council on Environmental Quality
Secretary Sally Jewell
Secretary Penny Pritzker

July 8, 2016

Dear President Obama:

As Rhode Island and Connecticut clergy and religious leaders, we have a responsibility to pass the riches of our faith traditions on to future generations. Deeply embedded in our faith traditions is the moral imperative to care for our natural world. The ocean inspires a great sense of mystery, awe, and promise. With modern subaquatic cameras, we are finally getting an inkling of what wonders lie underwater, and what these wonders reveal to us about the Divine. Up until very recently, most of us did not know that only 100 miles off the New England coastline, under the Atlantic Ocean, we have canyons as deep as the Grand Canyon and mounts nearly as high as the Rockies, which are highly biodiverse areas in the Atlantic.

As a matter of faithful stewardship of God's gifts, we believe it is a moral imperative to shelter this special place from harm. The coral canyons and seamounts have rare cold-water corals more than a thousand years old. They are home to hundreds of species. Scientists are continuing to identify new species in this area, which are proving to be some of the most exotic and wondrous creatures on Earth. In some of our faith traditions we might liken this place to an underwater modern "Noah's ark" which will help a diversity of species be more resilient to climate impacts.

We also appreciate these undersea treasures are integral to the historical heritage of tribes native to this region. Long before the advent of industrial activity in these waters, these tribes exercised wise stewardship of the gifts of the ocean. We owe it to future generations to maintain these gifts with the same level of care these tribes have demonstrated over many centuries.

By showing reverence and care for the natural world, we honor the Divine. By designating these special areas as national monuments, we improve the chances our communities can get to know, love, and be good stewards of these beautiful, unique, and biodiverse areas. These special places deserve permanent protection so they can thrive for generations to come.

We ask that you use your authority under the Antiquities Act to designate New England's Coral Canyons and Seamounts as the first marine monument in the Atlantic Ocean.

With hope,

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