

June 20, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

On behalf of the members and supporters of Oceana, I congratulate you on the decisive, visionary action to permanently protect the waters, corals, and other wildlife of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands. The national monument declaration provides exceptional safeguards for 140,000 square miles of ocean, including many areas that are vitally important to endangered monk seals, threatened sea turtles, sea birds, and other marine wildlife.

The Northwest Hawaiian Islands National Monument will protect approximately 70 percent of the tropical, shallow-water coral reefs found in U.S. ocean waters. Minimizing direct human contact with these special reefs will help to ensure they provide the full range of benefits, from shelter to nursery grounds, for the multitude of ocean wildlife that depend upon them.

In the upcoming weeks, your administration has another significant opportunity to conserve corals – deep-sea corals off of Alaska's Aleutian Islands. These deep-sea corals are fragile, slow-growing, and at risk from harmful fishing practices. Scientists are just beginning to document all the benefits these corals provide to other ocean wildlife. Last year, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council voted unanimously to close approximately 370,000 square miles of waters surrounding the Aleutian Islands from bottom trawls in order to conserve deep-sea coral and sponge gardens. The decision followed three years of public meetings, which revealed deep, broad support for positive action. The National Marine Fisheries Service will likely announce its final rule on the Aleutian Islands coral protections this summer. We look forward to applauding another substantial advancement for ocean ecosystems when the agency approves and implements the regional council's action on deep-sea corals.

Sincerely,



Andrew F. Sharpless  
Chief Executive Officer

ccs: The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez, U.S. Secretary of Commerce  
The Honorable James L. Connaughton, Chairman, Council on Environmental Quality  
The Honorable Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.),  
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator