



ENVIRONMENTAL ENTREPRENEURS®

The Independent Business Voice for the Environment

www.e2.org

April 2, 2015

John Bullard
Regional Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

Dear Mr. Bullard:

As members of Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2), we are writing to lend our support to the permanent protection for Cashes Ledge. Cashes Ledge's habitats are among the most diverse and fragile in all of New England, where our ocean resources support over 230,000 jobs and \$16 billion in economic activity, primarily in the tourism and recreation sector. These jobs rely on clean coastal waters and beaches and healthy and abundant fish and wildlife. Many of us are members of the business community in New England, and we believe that the economic health of the region depends on the wise stewardship and responsible management of our valuable natural resources, including our ocean resources.

E2 is a non-partisan, national community of business leaders who promote strong environmental policy to grow the economy. We are entrepreneurs, investors, and professionals from every sector of the economy who collectively have been involved in financing, creating or working in the early development of more than 1,700 companies, which have created over 570,000 jobs. Our members manage billions of dollars in venture and private equity capital that will flow over the next several years into new companies. We believe that improved ocean stewardship, including through the permanent protection of vulnerable habitat, will contribute to a stronger economy.

The unique area enclosed by the Cashes Ledge Closed Area encompasses an underwater mountain range whose peaks, ridges, basins and plains serve as habitat for an incredible array of ocean wildlife. The mountain peak known as Ammen Rock is home to the deepest and largest kelp forest along the Atlantic seaboard and creates a unique current that brings ocean wildlife from both the New England coast and from far offshore. The diverse habitats of Cashes Ledge provide a place of refuge and restoration for iconic New England fish such as cod and pollock and rare species like the Atlantic wolffish. Migrating schools of bluefin tuna, sea turtles, blue and porbeagle sharks and passing pods of highly endangered North Atlantic right whales and humpback whales are common at Cashes Ledge.

America's oceans are a highly valuable economic resource, but their value is threatened by the decline in the health of our nation's ocean ecosystems and resources, a decline documented by two national ocean commissions. As these resources are compromised, so too are the industries that depend on healthy and abundant fish and marine wildlife, including tourism, recreation, and living marine resources like fishing. In the Northeast, these sectors contribute over \$8 billion annually to the GDP. Commercial fisheries in New England alone have annual revenues exceeding \$1 billion. A key reason we support the long-term protection for the biologically rich Cashes Ledge Closed Area is the benefit that would flow to such ocean resources more broadly.

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In addition to benefiting economic and ecological health, ocean habitat protection also serves as a tool for building resiliency from the impacts of climate change and for reducing the impacts of excessive fishing. Hundreds of scientists seeking to understand what many believe to be the best remaining example of an undisturbed Gulf of Maine ecosystem also support the permanent protection of Cashes Ledge Closed Area.

The New England Fishery Management Council placed the area under protection through fisheries regulation in 2002 and Cashes Ledge has been free from the disturbance of bottom trawling and dredging since that time. Now Cashes Ledge deserves permanent protection from all harmful uses, especially bottom trawling and dredging.

We urge NOAA to maintain the longstanding protections for the Cashes Ledge Closed Area and work to permanently protect this special place. Thank you for your work to recognize and protect America's most outstanding natural treasures.

Sincerely,

The following 222 E2 members have signed this letter:

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