



## ENVIRONMENTAL ENTREPRENEURS®

The *Independent* Business Voice for the Environment

[www.e2.org](http://www.e2.org)

April 2, 2015

Daniel Basta  
Director  
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
1305 East West Highway  
N/NMS, 11th Floor  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Reed Bohne  
Northeast and Great Lakes Regional Director  
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
10 Ocean Science Circle  
Savannah, GA 31411

Dear Mr. Basta and Mr. Bohne:

As members of Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2), we are writing to lend our support to the nomination of the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area as a new national marine sanctuary. This constellation of five undersea canyons and four seamounts off the southern New England coast is home to ecological resources of national significance. Currently a virtually pristine deep ocean wilderness, the continued health of this area is particularly important to New England, where our ocean resources support over 230,000 jobs and \$16 billion in economic activity. Over half of these jobs are in the tourism and recreation sector which depends on clean ocean water and healthy and abundant fish and wildlife, such as those that live or rely on the canyons and seamounts area. 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 five undersea canyons and four nearby seamounts—the only seamounts in U.S. Atlantic waters—that comprise the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area support a remarkable richness and diversity of ocean life. The seamounts (Bear, Mytilus, Physalia, and Retriever) and the submarine canyons (Oceanographer, Lydonia, Gilbert, Nygren and Heezen) are home to the most abundant and diverse communities of deep sea corals on the Atlantic seaboard, some hundreds of years old and the height of small trees. The rich and dynamic ocean environment of the area attracts an array of ocean wildlife, including whales, sea turtles, tunas, and sea birds. A number of these species are iconic for the region, such as sperm whales and North Atlantic right whales, and are among those that help support New England's vibrant whale watching, recreational fishing, and seabird viewing industries.

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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 New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area is the benefit that would flow to such ocean resources more broadly.

Permanent protection of the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area will preserve these spectacular ocean features as thriving biodiversity hot spots and living marine laboratories. Such protection can also build resiliency against the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification, which makes it more difficult for corals and other marine animals to generate skeletons and shells. Protected habitat areas can help preserve genetic diversity, which will be vital for the ocean's inhabitants to be able to withstand more acidic and warmer conditions.

We urge you to move forward with long-term protection of these deep sea treasures and specifically to accept the nomination of the New England Coral Canyons and Seamounts Area as a national marine sanctuary. This will avoid irreversible damage to these important ecosystems, enhance their health and resilience, and contribute to a holistic approach to ocean stewardship, all of which will promote a strong economy.

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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