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6 November 2007

Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Todd Willens
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Under Secretary Lautenbacher and Deputy Assistant Secretary Willens:

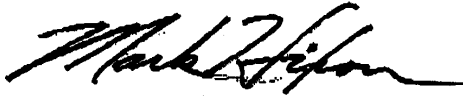
On October 25 at our meeting in Alpena, Michigan, the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (MPA FAC) drafted the following letter and voted to submit this letter for your consideration:

The MPA FAC is aware that proposals are being discussed to create a system of MPAs in the Gulf of Mexico and, potentially, elsewhere. Without taking a position on individual proposals, the MPA FAC strongly recommends that all such proposals apply the principles and processes for the development of a national system of MPAs that have been developed over the past four years (in particular, our June 2005 recommendations, entitled "Protecting America's Marine Environment: A Report of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee on Establishing and Managing a National System of Marine Protected Areas"). Specifically, we strongly recommend that our guidelines regarding public participation be applied to this proposed regional system and other MPA proposals.

The recommendations developed by the MPA FAC to promote a national system of MPAs stress the need for a logical, public process. We believe that the specific proposal for the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the development of a national system of MPAs in general, will be weakened if these guidelines are not followed. Therefore, we urge the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior to direct their respective agencies to use these guidelines when considering all MPA proposals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Hixon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Mark Hixon
Helen Thompson Professor of Marine Conservation Biology and
Chair, Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee