

**NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS
CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESERVE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

November 15, 2011

Ms. T. 'Aulani Wilhelm
NOAA Superintendent, Papahānaumokuākea
Marine National Monument and World Heritage Site
6600 Kalaniana'ole Highway, Suite 300
Honolulu, HI 96825

Dear Ms. Wilhelm:

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Reserve Advisory Council (RAC) appreciated your presentation on *Big Ocean: A Network of the World's Large-Scale Marine Managed Areas*, at our last meeting on July 11, 2011. The overview provided on *Big Ocean* made clear the pivotal role that the Reserve (and subsequent Monument) has played in ushering in a new genre of large-scale, remote marine conservation and how this emerging field is expanding exponentially, particularly in the Pacific. Importantly, it also underscored the potential long-term impact the network, and its initiatives, will likely have on global ocean governance, enabling Hawai'i and Papahānaumokuākea to help shape the future of large-scale marine management based on our experiences and history. Thank you for your founding vision to bring the network together and for investing staff time to help the network get started.

With over a decade of experience that runs the spectrum from management plan development and bringing together indigenous and western knowledge systems to community/stakeholder engagement and facilitating the incorporation of consensus advice through our advisory council, Papahānaumokuākea is uniquely suited to provide leadership essential to help professionalize and grow the emerging field of large-scale marine protected area management.

The RAC is confident that *Big Ocean* will succeed. In less than twelve months the network has already leveraged the intellectual capacity and real-world experience of its membership to produce: an international communiqué on the importance of large-scale marine protected areas, a shared 18-month work-plan for the network, quality presentations at a number of international and national meetings and conferences, and media coverage that included features in the *MPA News*. These accomplishments, combined with the network's vision to showcase the contributions of large-scale marine protected areas at the 2011 International Congress for Conservation Biologists (ICCB) and the 2012 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress, as well as the Third International Marine Protected Area Congress in 2013, demonstrates that *Big Ocean* is committed to its aims, including increasing its capacity and membership as the field continues to grow.

With the most critical work still ahead in bringing this emerging field into maturity, we believe it is critical that *Big Ocean* find every possible way to sustain itself over the long term to ensure

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that new sites that are established are real protected areas, not simply large areas noted on maps without demonstrable management. Such superficial growth in this field would detract from the hard work of sites like ours that have been the pioneers. As such, the RAC encourages the continued leadership of and investment in the network by the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. We hope to see that investment matched by other nations, federal management agencies, non-governmental organizations, regional and international organizations, and others.

With a global focus of organizations, like the United Nations and IUCN, on increasing the percentage of the ocean that is under protection, member sites of *Big Ocean*--like ours--can certainly provide their collective experience base and expertise from their respective professional staff, advisory/citizen bodies, and constituencies to inform and professionalize this new field. Because large-scale, remote marine protected areas are the frontier in ocean conservation, please consider this letter as a strong endorsement of the work you are doing in support of *Big Ocean* and the future of marine conservation.

Sincerely,



Timothy E. Johns
Advisory Council Chair
Northwestern Hawaiian Islands
Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve