



Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association, Inc.

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September 18, 2015

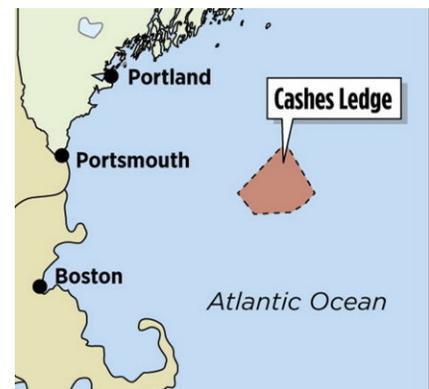
President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Opposition to Cashes Ledge and the New England Canyons designation a National Monument with in the region of the Gulf of Maine

Dear Mr. President;

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association along with the following organizations: Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association, Maine Lobstermen's Association, Downeast Lobstermen's Association, Maine Lobstermen's Union, Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Association, Rhode Island Lobstermen's Association, Gloucester Fisheries Commission and the American Bluefin Tuna Association (Organizations); collectively represent an estimated 10,500 commercial and charter fishermen from New Jersey to the Canadian Maritimes. Collectively, our Organizations are greatly concerned and strongly oppose the proposal put forth by environmental organizations to have Cashes Ledge and New England Canyons designated National Monuments. To unilaterally allow such a designation would usurp the established habitat and fisheries management public process and could be economically catastrophic not only to the commercial and charter fishermen, but also to hundreds of small coastal communities in New England.

The iconic New England commercial lobster industry has historically, fished within the Cashes Ledge and canyon areas without harm to the habitat/bottom. Over the years, the commercial fishermen, state and federal fisheries managers, and environmental groups have continually agreed that the Cashes Ledge region of the Gulf of Maine is home to a number of unique and important marine environments. State and federal fisheries managers have recognized the significance of this area and taken steps to ensure the long term protection of this unique habitat area. This includes prohibitions of mobile bottom tending gear from the area. The only fixed gear commercial fishery currently allowed is the lobster fishery, which is managed under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Act, via the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and NOAA Fisheries. These organizations have determined that the placement of lobster pots on the bottom has negligible impact on the habitat/bottom as Cashes Ledge continues to thrive even with lobster fishing taking place.



The management measures adopted to date have been the result of countless discussions, public hearings, rulings and collaborative efforts of scientists, commercial fishermen, state & federal fisheries managers, and other important stakeholders in the New England region. The key point is that these efforts have all been taken in an open, democratic, deliberative, public process that allows individuals to offer public comments on proposed restrictions, and offer suggestion on how to mitigate negative impacts. Furthermore, the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and NOAA Fisheries have agreed to prioritize the development of a coral amendment for the New England area, so consideration of the New England Canyons is premature at this time. The proposed Council management plan will be developed in an open public process that involves all parties, including the environmental organizations, and allow for extensive opportunities for comment from all concerned parties.

We strongly oppose the designation of Cashes Ledge and the New England Canyons as a National Monument under the Antiquities Act. Any designation for a National Monument would require a unilateral action by your office, so we are requesting that you reject any such effort and allow the current process by NEFMC, ASMFC, and NOAA Fisheries to take place.

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter of concern. Should you have any further questions or concerns please feel free to call me at 781-545-6984 or on mobile 508-738-1245.

Kind regards,
Beth Casoni, Executive Director
Massachusetts Lobstermen's Assoc.

David Borden, Executive Director
Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Assoc.

Patrice McCarron, Executive Director
Maine Lobstermen's Assoc.

Sheila Dassatt, Executive Director
Downeast Lobstermen's Assoc.

Charlie Wade, President
Stellwagen Bank Charter Boat Assoc.

Gregory Mataronas, President
Rhode Island Lobstermen's Assoc.

Rock Alley, President
Maine Lobstermen's Union

Ralph Pratt, President
American Bluefin Tuna Association

Mark Ring, Chairman
Gloucester Fisheries Commission

CC: Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
House Committee on Natural Resources
Senator Elizabeth Warren
Senator Edward Markey
Congressman William Keating
Congressman Stephen Lynch, Congressman Seth Moulton, Governor Charles Baker, MA FWE Commissioner George Peterson