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1ST DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

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COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND THE INTERNET  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
ENVIRONMENT AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS  
  
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES  
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August 2, 2006

Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.  
U.S. Navy (Ret.)  
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator  
14th Street & Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room 6217  
Washington, DC 20230

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PFMC

Dear Admiral Lautenbacher,

Recently there has been an astonishing discovery within the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. A viable and impressive community of deep sea corals has been discovered in an area where they were previously unknown. While this area does benefit from being located within a marine sanctuary, it is my hope that you will protect these areas further by restricting specific fishing activities in proximity of these sensitive deep sea coral habitats.

I was happy to see that the North Pacific and Pacific Regional Fishery Management Councils have taken action recently to protect Essential Fish Habitat from bottom trawling and bottom contact gear in waters off of Alaska, Washington, Oregon and California. Approximately 135,000 square miles off the West Coast are now protected from destructive fishing gear because of the actions taken by the Councils. As you know, because the vast majority of these newly identified coral sites are within the Sanctuary, NOAA should take proactive steps in conjunction with the Pacific Fishery Management Council to immediately ensure the protection of these deep sea treasures.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the magnitude of this discovery off the Washington Coast. Consequently, I urge you to engage the Pacific Council and expand the scope of those areas protected from bottom trawling to include these important deep sea corals within the Sanctuary. As Congress debates legislation to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens legislation, actions by the National Marine Sanctuary system could weigh heavily on any final legislation that becomes law. The prompt consideration of measures to protect these areas is appreciated.

Sincerely,

JAY INSLEE  
Member of Congress

Cc: Pacific Fishery Management Council