



Friends of the Monument
PO BOX 500921
Saipan, MP 96950

FRIENDS OF THE MARINE MONUMENT PRESS RELEASE

White House to Open Discussions on Marine Monument

CONTACT: Ignacio (Ike) Cabrera: 256-5648; or Ken Kramer: 288-2664

SAIPAN, CNMI: August 24, 2008 –The *Associated Press* is reporting that the White House will begin a dialogue with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands regarding the possibility of establishing a Marianas Trench Marine National Monument. This is the beginning of a process, wherein the federal government will assess the area for its potential as a marine monument. The forthcoming White House announcement will fulfill the request by the CNMI House and Senate joint resolution asking for more information with the federal government before any action is taken to designate a monument.

Rep. Tina Sablan said: "Members of the Legislature and the community have consistently asked for more information about the potential advantages and challenges of the proposed Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, and for the opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with the federal government about the proposal. I am pleased to learn that President Bush has agreed to send representatives to the CNMI to discuss the marine monument proposal with us. I am sure we will receive them hospitably, and with open minds. I am deeply interested in exploring all opportunities to protect our unique marine resources for the benefit of present and future generations."

Ignacio V. Cabrera, Chairman for the recently-organized "Friends of the Marine Monument," agreed, saying: "We applaud the White House for listening to the people of the CNMI and coming to speak directly with us. We are confident that public support will grow as more people come to understand the multitude of potential benefits the monument will bring to the CNMI. We believe that a marine monument in the northernmost waters of the CNMI would be good for our marine life, good for our economy, and protect our culture."

Andrew S. Salas, former Congressman and owner of Hawaii Bar & Grill said: "I am happy that President Bush and the federal government are coming over to talk to us regarding the monument project. Many members of the legislature were worried that there would be a unilateral decision to declare the monument without local input. As a former Congressman, I see that the announcement shows that the President wants our

input and it is important for our people. With any good ideas, there are always concerns; but in the end, when you have a dialogue, a better product is developed. I just want to thank President Bush for respecting our people and coming over to the CNMI to further discussions. It shows the local peoples' input regarding local customs and traditions are important and we thank the President for that respect. This monument project is important both economically and environmentally for our people. I am a strong supporter of this project and look forward to seeing it move forward."

A marine monument in the northern waters of the CNMI would foster significant benefits to the CNMI, including protection of the marine life in the monument from illegal fishing; protection of the rich diversity of corals; and depletion of our fisheries from industrial commercial fishing. In addition, the monument would act as a sanctuary, replenishing our ocean; so that our children and our children's children will be able to practice our cultural heritage of fishing. When the monument in the northwestern Hawaiian Islands was created, it gained national and international recognition in the media, including coverage in the national evening TV news shows; and featured on the front page of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *LA Times*, as well as in numerous newspapers around the world. In fact, it was named one of the top ten science stories of 2006 by *USA Today*.

Once established, a monument offers an annual economic benefit and a key ingredient for tourism marketing. A recent economic analysis has shown that a monument would bring in at least \$10 million dollars annually into our economy through increased tourism, and government spending; and it would provide 400 local jobs. Scientist around the world will want to study the monument area because it will provide scientist a controlled area where their observations won't be disturbed by industrial commercial fishing or destructive sea bed mining.

The White House has proposed other potential areas for marine monuments that CNMI will be competing with. They include:

1. The pristine Rose Atoll near American Samoa, where the Governor has requested a monument, and
2. The Line Islands in the central Pacific along the equator. It is home to five times as many coral species as the Florida Keys.

The Friends of the Marine Monument is a coalition of CNMI residents working to educate the public about how a marine monument in the northernmost waters of the CNMI can benefit the CNMI.