



SAIPAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

P.O. Box 500806 CK Saipan, MP 96950-0806 • Phone (670) 233-7150 • Fax: (670) 233-7151
www.saipanchamber.com info@saipanchamber.com

May 5, 2008

**2008
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Mr. Jay Nelson
Director – Ocean Legacy Project
Pew Environmental Group
175 South Franklin Street, 3rd Floor
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Mr. Nelson:

On behalf of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, I thank you for your presentation concerning the proposed Mariana Trench Marine National Monument. We are aware that the proposal has been unfavorably received by some members of the general public as well as a number of elected officials. We believe that, to a large degree, negative responses to the monument concept may arise from a lack of understanding with respect to both the intent of the proposal, as well as the process by which any agreement concerning the monument would be reached.

The monument concept, as we understand it, has merit and warrants further discussion and consideration. We are cognizant of, and agree with, the local community's concerns that any such undertaking be a collaborative effort that respects the rich culture and unique political status of the islands. We wholeheartedly support any proposal that allows the Commonwealth substantive participation in, and ultimate approval of, the design and execution of a concept that would preserve our environment, increase global awareness of the islands, respect local culture, and benefit our economy. We believe your proposal has such potential. The Commonwealth has, in recent years, made great strides in the areas of environmental awareness and conservation, and we believe that your proposal could receive greater support if the goals, possibilities, and process were more widely communicated and understood.

We wholeheartedly support any efforts by the Ocean Legacy Project to engage members of our community, including elected officials, in a dialogue relative to the monument concept. We would be happy to, at your request, attempt to help facilitate additional educational forums both for elected officials as well as for members of the general public. Please let us know how we may be of assistance in this regard.

Sincerely,

James T. Arenovski
President