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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5200

March 23, 2023

Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Haaland and Secretary Raimondo,

I write to you regarding President Joe Biden's March 22, 2023, announcement of a Presidential Memorandum directing you to consider initiating a new National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) designation for some 777,000 miles around the Pacific Remote Islands.

I wrote the enclosed letter of June 20, 2022 to the President in support of Governor Lemanu to oppose any expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) and urged the President to engage regional actors before any decision is taken. On September 28, 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Director sent the enclosed reply stating that the "FWS is not considering additional or potential expansion of the PRIMNM beyond what has already been implemented by Presidential Proclamations 8336 and 9173." At the IGIA forum at the Department of the Interior last month, the administration made no effort to discuss this issue with the Pacific delegations or to notify us that such a drastic change to our way of life was even being considered. What changed? Why were we not given the courtesy of a discussion or even advance notice of this policy?

I strongly oppose any new or expanded National Marine Sanctuary designations in the Pacific that do not allow for commercial and subsistence fishing, especially ones that are implemented by executive order without consultation with native Samoans and other Pacific Islanders who have cared for and relied on these waters for millennia. This action would destroy American Samoa's fishing industry, which makes up about 80% of our local economy, contribute to regional food insecurity, and do nothing to address the predatory IUU fishing practices of the Chinese Communist Party.

By expanding the current Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) or designating a new NMS nearly double its size, American Samoan fishing vessels would have to venture even further out from home to catch anything, including tuna for our

cannery. Because our fishermen do their best to abide by the law, their potential Pacific fishing grounds would be severely limited. Meanwhile, IUU fishing from the likes of the CCP would essentially continue with the perverse effect of this action benefiting illegal Chinese fishing at the expense of Americans.

Furthermore, declaring a swath of ocean nearly four times the size of California as a new NMS could worsen regional food insecurity. Native and commercial fishing from Hawai'i to Samoa would be disrupted, as the current PRIMNM and Rose Atoll Marine National Monuments already prohibit much of the best fishing grounds in the Pacific.

I also cannot see how destroying the economy of the southern-most U.S. territory and declaring vast sections of the Pacific unfishable for our neighbors in a time of strategic competition with China will help our diplomatic efforts in the region. This action is especially more concerning given that our law enforcement efforts and U.S. Coast Guard presence in the region are limited. This action is tantamount to the federal government tying our hands while CCP fishing vessels rob our house.

This expansion is also unprecedented, as no regional and local actors were even consulted before the President's announcement. The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC), which is authorized by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to make fishery-management decisions for the PRIMNM, was similarly left in the dark. Essentially, the Administration replaced the regional mechanisms in place to ensure that local equities are weighed with a White House tweet.

The Administration's action in the Pacific continues a reckless pattern of abuse of the Antiquities Act to rope off millions of acres of lands and waters with a dangerous disregard for the people who rely on these areas or even enforcement mechanisms to ensure no one else benefits from these closures. As has been well put by Senator Mike Lee, whose state had 1.3 million acres declared as the Bears Ears National Monument despite local opposition, this constitutes a 'midnight monument spree' that disregards the will of the local populations. Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo also decried the national monument declaration in his state as a 'federal confiscation' that will 'cost Nevadans for generations to come.' The same is true for American Samoans, who could see their economy destroyed by this federal confiscation of waters without respect to our wishes.

In short, this action seems to be a knee-jerk reaction to placate environmental activists who are hostile to, or at the very least ignorant of, the ways of life of people who actually live in the Pacific. As one of the most senior elected officials from the Pacific region, I implore you and the Administration to reconsider this brash policy action that benefits the U.S. in no way while paving the way for CCP fishing companies to extend their reach into the Western and South Pacific.

I urge you to consult with our Governor and our industry stakeholders to find reasonable ways to bolster conservation efforts, strengthen American Samoan fishing, and address our national food security. The Administration must allow the WPFMC to do their job under the law and manage the waters under its jurisdiction with buy-in from regional actors, as former Interior

Secretary Ryan Zinke recommended during his tenure. The Pacific needs proper fishing management instead of outright and unfair fishing bans in our own waters.

I have spent my life in the region. I have grown up in these waters. I cannot sit idly by while the country that American Samoans love mortgages their future for absolutely nothing in return. American Samoans are not against conservation; in fact our ancestors have been the chief custodians of these very same waters for centuries. We have been doing conservation work since before we became part of the United States. What we do oppose, however, is conservation by confiscation without consultation, and without regard to the local economic impacts. I urge you again to reconsider this dangerous policy.

Sincerely,



Uifa'atali Aumua Coleman Radewagen
Member of Congress, American Samoa

Cc:

Hon. Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State
Dr. Richard Spinrad, Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
Hon. Carmen G. Cantor, Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs
Hon. Lemanu P.S. Mauga, Governor of American Samoa
Hon. Talauega E.V. Ale, Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa
Hon. Joe Manchin, Chairman, Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Hon. John Barrasso, Ranking Member, Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Hon. Bruce Westerman, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee
Hon. Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee
Hon. Cathy McMorris-Rogers, Chairman, House Energy & Commerce Committee
Hon. Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, House Energy & Commerce Committee
Hon. Mike Simpson, Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior
Hon. Chellie Pingree, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior
Hon. Dan Newhouse, Chairman, Congressional Western Caucus
Hon. Mike Lee, U.S. Senator, Utah