

Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument

Public Comments Transcript

September 27, 2023

Attendees: 4

Jessica Miller Miller, Kearns & West 05:14

It's a question and a comment, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Let's come back to that. Are there any other questions or comments about the nature of the planning process or logistics surrounding a timeframe, and ways you can participate? Anything like that? Okay, well not hearing anything, please feel free to interrupt and ask the question if you need to. I think we'll kind of turn our gears towards the sort of open forum so that you all can start to submit questions, submit your comments and your questions that are unanswered. Or maybe feel aren't addressed by the management plan. So if you can, please state your name, and also, the town of your residence would be great. And then try and keep your comments to three minutes. But honestly, we're a very small group and I feel like if we all we all want a chance to speak so I'll make sure that it flows through everyone here. But in the meantime, does anyone have any comments they want to share or things you'd like to submit for the team to think about in terms of future planning and management consolidation? [pause] Go ahead. So I'm not concerned about it being out of order unless you all are. [indistinguishable joke, laughing] Number one is welcome to go first.

Jessica Miller Miller 07:07

Sure, what don't we just go through and then we'll come back.

Jessica Miller Miller 07:11

If you have additional questions outside of the first round, then we'll come back to them and I think it'll probably jog your memory about other things you might be curious about that are on the tip of your tongue. So number one, do you have any questions? And I hate to refer to you as number one can you tell me your name

Denny Colbert Colbert 07:30

.....I'm on a mission. I've been fishing down in the canyons since mid 80s. And even at the website that I read tonight, it says the area's pristine and if I'm fishing with lobster gear for lobster and crab down there and the area's pristine, since the 80s, and I'm still upset that we were kicked out of it for no reason. When we were kicked out of there, all fisheries that were kicked out of them were certified sustainable and traceable. I find as we as we tend get older, a couple of us here are older, that everyone likes to conserve, but they realize to that to conserve like this, I mean we're all for conservation. No one wants,

everyone wants to conserve the land. It doesn't- you can even hear my voice. It doesn't get... until you're emotionally attached to it, it doesn't mean anything. So like I was saying with my with a lobsters and crabs and even the Obama administration and I didn't miss a meeting, I was there for every meeting. It was a done deal before before they started. And Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association was part of the deal there and it Bonnie Spinazzola, I don't know if any of you are old enough to remember her. She was the head of our organization. We made it a sanctuary years ago. And the reason I want to bring up the sanctuary is because that's the Canyon that has been talked about as a sanctuary. And I said, " Bonnie- this is... everybody's... they're just sticking the old camel's nose in the tent." She goes, "Denny, you get so old and cynical." Oh my god. I was a lot younger then. It had to be 20 years ago. And what happened? I said, "Bonnie, once they get in there, they're gonna call it a sanctuary. And 20 years from now they're gonna kick us out." And that's what happened. So, it is frustrating, and especially working with the Obama administration. I think they said we had direct contacts with the White House, but all it was a intern with his feet up on his desk. It was so pathetic. Some of the guys we were in- we were doing the first zoom calls before they were zoom calls. We were all in our pickups trucks. And I know I'm venting and some of the guys said, "Hey, they're gonna listen to us, we think they're gonna refine this with NEPA." I go, "Guys, it was an exit interview. And that's all it was." So again, part of the, as I was reading this tonight, it says "The cooperation between the fishermen and stuff..." Yes, I think fishermen we have a terrible reputation in your community. What- what NOAA has done, what NMFS has done, what the Obama administration has done with this particular incident has made the government against us. I mean, there's no trust, there's no nothing. So again, the reason I'm bringing up the sanctuary, I'm actually talking to the fisherman at Hudson, I said, "You guys gotta do everything you can not to make that a sanctuary because it's just gonna happen to you 20 years from now." When my last question is, If it's pristine now, with the fishing there since the-- I wasn't the first there, I've been fishing since like '85, '86.. If it's pristine there with our lobster gear and our crab gear, why can't we fish there? That's what I was asking. If there's any, any talk at all about letting commercial fishermen back. And it's- I get it. 50% of [indistinguishable] US income view is encompassed a couple weeks ago, September 15. It's easy to say that looking at me, it's a lot harder for me looking at you guys.

Jessica Miller Miller 11:04

We appreciate your comments, and it's been recorded. We really appreciate you.

Denny Colbert 11:09

We can't sort this right now? [laughing]

Jessica Miller Miller 11:13

Unfortunately, I don't think you can sort all this...

Denny Colbert 11:16

Just kidding!

Jessica Miller Miller 11:18

I appreciate you bringing it up, and it's duly noted. So thank you very much.

Marianne Randall Randall 11:24

Jessica Miller, can.... I give a distinction between the monument and a sanctuary?

Jessica Miller 11:26

Sure, yep.

Marianne Randall 11:28

The Monument process establishes the Presidential Proclamation Sanctuary process, the sanctuary process is through the Department of Commerce I believe, and there is a lot more public comment in that.

Denny Colbert 11:46

Yeah, yes but - there's a big but - I don't buy it. It's just by chance that they picked the closest-- the sanctuary is almost outlined, I mean, the monument is almost outlining the sanctuary.

Jessica Miller 12:02

Thanks for your time. Appreciate it. And thanks for the distinction. We'll move to who has number two. Thank you, Chloe. Can you say your name and- sorry, I just said your name. Can you say your name and the town of residence?

Chloe Foss 12:19

Sure, thanks. Chloe Foss. I live in Boston. I'm going to read my formal comment in the offchance that the government does get shut down, just in case. Okay. So, apologies for this being kind of an intimate public gathering you have today. But for the purposes of the record. So, thank you. I'm Chloe Foss, speaking on behalf of Conservation Law Foundation. I'd like to start by speaking briefly with you to secure a final management plan, consistent with the presidential proclamations 9496 and 10287 to ensure that this underwater treasure that we're talking about here today is effectively safer. CLF will submit additional written comments but today I'm just gonna raise a couple initial recommendations for Fish and Wildlife

Service and NOAA to consider as agency slash stakeholder input on the finalization of the Draft Management Plan. First, we commend the agencies for developing the joint draft management plan for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument in advance of September 15, 2023, as required by the Presidential proclamations. The release of this draft plan is a vital step towards ensuring a surge in biodiversity and cultural resources of the first and only Marine Monument in the Atlantic Ocean is effectively safer. We urge the finalization of this draft plan as soon as possible and no later than 2024 to ensure the national treasure is protected and guards for generations to come. Second, we fully support draft plans inclusion of a robust public education outreach component that prioritizes serving communities that have historically not had access to an open and spacious, creating equitable and accessible engagement opportunities for the public to connect with the vast and inspiring wonder of the monument is imperative. We prioritize accessible and inclusive educational resources that share the incredible biodiversity of the monument with the diverse US public. We also support the management plans inclusion of an exploration research plan aimed at improving conservation outcomes that ensure biodiversity and consider climate change impacts and encourage that adaptive management strategies to address climate change impacts and annual management planning. We commend the draft plans inclusion of an exploration research plan aimed at improving understanding of biological, physical and cultural and historical resources in the Monument. Third, because the monument prohibits extractive activities the final management plan should include an effective monitoring and enforcement program to ensure compliance consistent with the Proclamations. Here we support the use of a special use permit when accessing the Monument. An access permit and appropriate vessel tracking would enable Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA to track and understand the uses of the monument, ensure monument users are aware of the area's provisions, and facilitate effective enforcement and compliance with the monument's rules and regulations. While we recognize that funding challenges to accomplishing all the goals and objectives in the management plan persist. Stewarding this remarkable area and areas like them is a national priority and our community will support efforts by the agencies to increase and ensure adequate funding to achieve if the plans goals in their entirety. Finally, we look forward to seeing regulations implement all the prohibitions in the plan. We understand that there are forthcoming proposed regulations related to commercial fishing, but additional regulations will be necessary similar to those to effectively enforce remaining activities. With the release of this draft plan, we thank the agency's continued demonstrated commitment to safeguard the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument. Thank you.

Jessica Miller Miller 16:18

Thanks for your comments, Chloe. Who had number 3? Number 3? Was there anything you want to just submit for the record?

Speaker 4 16:21

No.

Jessica Miller 16:21

No?

Speaker 4 16:21

Well...[indistinguishable]

Jessica Miller 16:21

Oh, go - you can go.

Speaker 4 16:27

Well, I'm number four.

Jessica Miller 16:29

Oh you're number four!

Speaker 4 16:30

So number three...

Jessica Miller 16:32

Did you have... Okay, well [indistinguishable] so go ahead. Can you state your name and the town that you live in?

Putnam Maclean 16:41

Yes, Putnam Maclean. Commercial fishing for swordfish and two other variants. Still have a couple of longline boats and actually fish down in that area. I'm just curious, raise your hand if any- is there anybody in here that out there actually been in the Monument and seen it in there. Anybody? Yeah. But my point is when you're there, what you see is water and water is not a monument. Water is not an antiquity under any definition of this particular law. Fish are not monuments, they're not antiquities, although we might have to think of them as being that way. And so, the water that-- it's not a swimming pool out there and water moves, the water that's in the Monument right now is not there tomorrow. It's gone. Fish that could be here today are not there, they go out there somewhere else. When worse, in terms of management and prohibiting commercial fishing and limiting our activity is that if the whales you want to get away from are not in the Monument, but they're next to it or somewhere else that you could get away from the area where the Monument is, the water that's one mile above where the

volcanoes are then you then you can't do that, you are limited and poor very poorly managed the flora and fauna and whatever else you're talking about. It doesn't- closed areas are not good or effective or... It's pointless even to actually spend any money to do it that way. But the problem is that it's so hard to quantify, you know, all those different things. Difficult federal job and its somewhat common sense that you know, we can't manage fish and species and all these other things that way. That's part of my, you know, objection to what the Monument has done with commercial fishing. It's just that in a lot of cases it's counterproductive. So that's, that's kind of the whole point. There may be, no- there are lawsuits pending that may or may not have an effect of whether we can consider water or in the middle of the ocean as being some kind of antiquity under the original law. So, we'll see where that goes. But we'd really like to have our fishing opportunities back because that's a positive for the country and very big positive for the country as a whole. Make it more difficult for us to fish without some really good rationale just doesn't make a lot of sense, really.

Jessica Miller 20:07

Thank you for your comments. Let's see if number three has any questions. Denny, go ahead.

Denny Culbert 20:17

I just want to jump on what he was saying, I think he's trying to say is closed areas – it's hot right now, and they're closing areas all over the place. The Monument, I just moved 25 trawls inside the Monument and I outlined because I was trying on the equipment. I think what he's trying to say is that it's hot to close areas, and it doesn't really help because all it does it outline the Monument with trawls. I'm not fishing with the trawls, but I have to keep the gear outside of the Monument.

Jessica Miller 20:49

Thanks for having anything else. Okay and I guess, do you have anyone else have anything they'd like to submit for the record? One last call. Any other comments, questions, things that you might not have been addressed or considered? Okay, so, I think okay, so if you'd like to submit a written paper. If you'd like to submit a written comment, you can do so until October 26. Any final questions or comments. Putnam, go ahead.

Putnam Maclean 22:46

Just from what I know, the Monument area, the seamounts on the shelf, none of those areas have ever been an area of particular habitat for turtles or whales or fish or pretty much anything that we might interact with. We have a lot of areas where they might be concerned about whales and trawls, and areas that are closed, and rules and regulations that try to limit interactions with any species that are not directly related to something you want to catch. That area has never been identified as an area for some kind of conservation. In fact that area, if you were trying to avoid all of these other areas, is where you would go.

Denny Colbert 24:52

I think we're swimming upstream here. When they first came out with the coral, the coral was down 550, and we fished out 3500 lobsters out of there, and they said, on no, that's not what we meant. We meant this coral, which is shoal from the Gulf of Maine and they said this section of the Atlantic is warming faster than any other section, and if someone wants to do a science test, just give it to me, I'll do it. That year they were saying that the temperature was eight degrees colder not 8/10ths where the Monument is. The Monument is affected by eddies. I know we're swimming upstream, and I know we're just venting to you guys. The way it came out was just wrong.

Jessica Miller Miller 26:10

We appreciate your comments.

Denny Colbert 26:12:

No, you don't

Jessica Miller Miller 26:

Yes, we really do. That's why we're here. There are other ways to comment. There are meetings coming up and you can submit a written comment. The schedule is up here, so feel free to drop in. The next is going to be virtual, and then in Providence on the 10th, on the 13th it will be virtual, on the 18th it will be in Portsmouth, and then on the 23rd in the evening there will be a virtual meeting. So, I just want to encourage you to either come or submit a written comment as well but noting that your comments have been recorded today as well, so thank you very much for your participation, and for submitting comments, and we do have plenty of time, so you can still submit a comment.

Marianne Randall 27:19

Just keep an eye out on the Fish and Wildlife website for these meetings and schedules.

Jessica Miller Miller 27:23

Yes, they might be rescheduled if there is a shutdown, we will have that information up on the website.

Brittany Petersen Petersen 27:35

And if anyone wants a physical copy, I'm more of a physical copy reader myself, there are some copies in the back.

Jessica Miller Miller 27:43

Any other comments or questions? Thanks for coming and have a good evening.