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August 8, 2022

Ms. LeAnn Hogan
Regional Operations Coordinator
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway, SSMC4
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: NOAA-NOS-2022-0053

Dear Ms. Hogan,

We write to express our strong support for designating Hudson Canyon as a national marine sanctuary and including this national treasure within the National Marine Sanctuary System. Sanctuary designation would protect biodiversity and deep sea coral ecosystems, benefit economic growth and tourism, and bring new monitoring, education, and research opportunities to diverse communities across New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Rivaling the depth and scale of the Grand Canyon, the Hudson Canyon is the largest submarine canyon along the United States' Atlantic coast and one of the largest in the world. Hudson Canyon is home to a remarkable diversity of marine life, including a range of endangered, protected, and sensitive species. The canyon is rich in biodiversity and provides habitats for numerous species of marine mammals, fish, and invertebrate.

The New York Bight supports one of the highest diversities of marine mammals and sea turtles in US waters. Bottlenose dolphins, sperm whales, and loggerhead turtles call the waters in and around Hudson Canyon home. Hudson Canyon is also home to deep sea corals that provide habitat and refuge for a variety of species and contribute to marine biodiversity. Deep-sea corals grow very slowly, often only a few millimeters per year, and some produce colonies that are over 1,000 years old. Sanctuary designation would prevent oil and gas exploration which could destroy these rare and fragile ecosystems that if damaged would take centuries to recover.

The Hudson Canyon and surrounding waters support robust fisheries and are home to commercially valuable species such as sea scallops and American lobster. Recreational fishing around Hudson Canyon continues to be a popular source of economic development for the region. The biodiversity of the canyon which directly supports the local economy is dependent on the conservation and management of these resources.

Hudson Canyon provides opportunities for numerous recreational activities that deliver countless publicly derived benefits for the more than 22 million people that live along the coast of the New York Bight. Whale watchers and birders come to watch the yearly migration of whales and seabirds through the Hudson Canyon and divers explore the shallower areas in and around the canyon. The waters of the proposed sanctuary are a very popular destination for



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recreational fishermen, especially big-game anglers seeking large species of fish. Hudson Canyon is a treasure that needs to be protected so that future generations can continue to fish, dive, and boat in these precious waters.

Indigenous communities in the area maintained strong oral traditions and unbroken cultural practices tied to the ocean and coastal waters for millennia. Coastal tribes rely on Hudson Canyon dependent species such as summer flounder and black sea bass for food and culture. Sanctuary designation would help to sustain healthy populations of these culturally significant species.

Multiple shipwrecks, ranging from freighters to U.S military radar platforms are found within the proposed boundaries of the Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary and can provide important insight into the maritime heritage of the area. Sanctuary designation would preserve these wrecks in perpetuity, allowing for study and interpretation of these historically distinctive national treasures.

Sanctuary designation will provide numerous opportunities for research and education. Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges in marine conservation and submarine canyons are among the most sensitive ocean habitats. Hudson Canyon can serve as a valuable site for monitoring the impacts of climate change in submarine canyons and the potential role of submarine canyons as refuge for wildlife surviving in a changing climate. Increased investment in STEM research, monitoring, education, and career workforce development programming will greatly benefit local communities.

We urge NOAA to designate the proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary to conserve and celebrate these underwater national treasures and allow current and future generations to enjoy, appreciate and benefit from these special places.

Sincerely,