

March 20, 2023

Ellen Brody
Great Lakes Regional Coordinator
4840 South State Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48108-9719

Re: NOAA-NOS-2021-0050

Dear Ms. Brody,

We write to express our strong support for designating the proposed Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary and including this national treasure within the National Marine Sanctuary System. Sanctuary designation would preserve and raise national awareness and appreciation of a historically-significant collection of shipwrecks and other maritime heritage and cultural resources; foster partnerships with researchers and educators to discover additional wonders beneath the waves and tell the story of our past; and create business and job opportunities from tourism and outdoor recreation.

Lake Ontario's deep, cold freshwater ensures the submerged resources that tell the story of our nation's history are well-preserved. The 1,724 square miles proposed for the sanctuary encompass 43 known shipwrecks and one submerged aircraft that span over 200 years of history in the eastern waters of Lake Ontario. Of these, the *St. Peter* is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the *Lady Washington* is the second oldest (1797) intact shipwreck discovered in the Great Lakes. An additional 20 shipwrecks, three historic aircraft, and several other underwater archaeological sites that may be of cultural significance to Indigenous Nations and Tribes may also be located in the area, yet to be discovered.

Sanctuary designation would increase research and educational opportunities by cultivating partnerships with local schools, non-profits, museums, and research entities that conduct studies in science and archaeology in this region. The designation would also benefit local community economic growth and tourism goals of the counties of Jefferson, Oswego, Cayuga and Wayne, along with the City of Oswego and New York State.

The nationally significant maritime and cultural heritage resources of Eastern Lake Ontario are magnificent yet vulnerable. Natural processes and human impacts threaten these non-renewable resources. The regulations in the proposed rule for the Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary would help to protect these valuable resources.

This site, nominated by local communities and supported by New York State, is endorsed by diverse coalitions of local, state and national elected officials, historical societies, businesses, museums and environmental, recreational, conservation, fishing, tourism, and educational groups. We stand united with these communities in support for adding the proposed Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary to the National Marine Sanctuary System.

We urge NOAA to designate the proposed Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary to preserve and celebrate these underwater national treasures so current and future generations can enjoy these special places.

Sincerely,