

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Attn: Mr. William Douros, Regional Director
West Coast Region 99 Pacific St., Suite 100
Monterey, CA 93940
william.douros@noaa.gov

November 17, 2016

Dear Mr. Douros,

I am writing to express my very strong support for the community of St. George's nomination to create a National Marine Sanctuary.

For good portion of my life and until this past year, I have been a resident of Alaska. Just before assuming my current post, I served as the Executive Director of the Yukon River Inter-tribal Watershed Council. In that capacity, I worked with 70 tribes and First Nations People in Alaska and Canada across a 326,000 square-mile area, helping to bring together traditional native knowledge with contemporary science to address the many environmental and cultural challenges that small, remote villages are confronting in the face of climate change.

I have continued this work in my capacity as an Indigenous Peoples Scholar working with the National Science Foundation's Science and Technology Center for Coastal Marine Observation and Prediction (CMOP) at the Oregon Health and Science University's Institute of Environmental Health. As a former member of the President Obama's Commission for Environmental Cooperation and on behalf of National Geographic, I have also had the chance to observe the profound environmental and cultural impacts that climate change is having on indigenous communities across the United States and in such remote areas as the Amazon Basin, The Nile, and Siberia. It is essential that native communities take action to protect their natural resources, their economies and their cultures.

As an Alaskan, I know how special the Pribilof Island region is, environmentally, culturally and historically. Having lived in Cold Bay and traveled throughout the region and the Pribilof's I gained unique insight from the residents and an appreciation for, not only the vibrance of the region, but the fragility. The Unangan people are direct descendants of some of our continent's first inhabitants. The island's marine resources are some of the most significant in the world. The creation of a National Marine Sanctuary would offer great hope to the people and the animals they depend on for subsistence. Adaptive management of resources, more research, greater use of traditional knowledge and increased tourism will all greatly help the island's economy and create a future for St. George's youth, while ensuring climate resilience.

In the very strongest terms I support St. George's nomination and urge the creation of the St. George Unangan Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,



Jon Waterhouse
Indigenous Peoples Scholar, Institute for Environmental Health
National Geographic Education Fellow and Explorer