

24 April 2012

Mark Lewis, Superintendent  
Biscayne National Park  
9700 SW 328 Street  
Homestead, Florida 33033-5634

Dear Superintendent Lewis,

The undersigned businesses and organizations are leaders in or otherwise associated with the sport diving industry in south Florida. The future of our businesses and the quality of our diving experiences is so closely associated with the health, diversity, and sustainability of marine resources of South Florida, and therefore we care about the ecological integrity of Biscayne National Park (BNP), especially the coral reef track. BNP is a special place, and we have a keen interest in effective management that will preserve and protect park resources for the education, inspiration, recreation, economic impact, and enjoyment of present and future generations. To that end, we support a substantial marine reserve in BNP to provide for a high-quality diving and snorkeling experience.

As you know, Congress intended the National Park System to be protected for “the common benefit of all the people of the United States,” and therefore held to a higher standard of protection to maintain the value of such areas now and in the future. We believe that there is strong scientific consensus, supported by abundant evidence, that marine reserves are uniquely effective in restoring, sustaining and conserving coral reef ecosystems. Particularly when placed in areas heavily impacted by fishing activities, marine reserves result in relatively rapid increases in size and abundance of previously targeted fish and invertebrates, as well as in overall species richness and diversity, as evidenced by the early results of the Pole and Troll Zone in Everglades National Park and in the Research Natural Area of Dry Tortugas National Park. Coral reef habitats protected by implementing marine reserves typically support communities that are significantly and often strikingly different from those that continue to be subjected to extractive activities.

We believe that establishment of marine reserves in Biscayne National Park to restore the reef system and its full diversity and abundance of marine life, along with proper implementation, enforcement and marketing to the diving public, would have a strong potential to transform the park into a world class diving and tourism destination with potentially enormous economic opportunities and benefits to the local economy. Moreover, if designed and managed appropriately, a large marine reserve on the reef track in BNP could draw more anglers because of the opportunity to land more and larger fish outside of the reserve, when compared to other areas in South Florida.

Consequently, we take this opportunity to publically support the establishment of marine reserves on the coral reefs within Biscayne National Park. Should a decision be made to establish marine

reserves in the park, the south Florida sport diving industry stands ready, willing, and able to work with you to build public support, as well as helping to develop effective management and enforcement strategies.

Sincerely,

Signatures waived to expedite delivery

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