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To the American Peoples' US Senators,

I serve my country here with this testimony from more than 30 years of professional fishing experience in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM).

For centuries in the US GOM, thousands of men and women for countless generations have responsibly and sustainably accessed while wisely harvested the bounty of both of the Gulf's fisheries and energy resources. Until just the last few years, the US Government has practiced a proven and balanced "multiple use" management policy for the American people's resources in the GOM. Today, there are thousands of fishermen and oil workers offshore in the GOM, carefully and safely working to simultaneously harvest a tiny portion of the resources while responsibly providing the protections necessary to assure there will be plenty of resources for tomorrow. The non-harvestable resources are equally important and must be protected from overfishing and unfortunate oil spills seen in countries around the world.

There are two critically important and delicate systems to balance in the GOM. First, is the ecologic system of vibrant, flourishing, and magnificent marine life. The other is an economic system of human activity. These two major systems of natural and human activity are interlinked in a delicate balance,

where one can benefit and grow from the other, if managed wisely.

Care comes in many forms - some from responsible regulations, but more from engaged stakeholders working to protect and responsibly manage resources and nationally significant places. That's why I volunteered and currently serve as an Advisory Council member and many other fishing industry leadership roles. For Sanctuary status, we must select only places that are truly nationally significant to all Americans, not just places that marine scientists feel are significant to them. The Federal agencies charged with regulating and managing multi-use activities must be sensitive to the balance of protecting and enhancing American jobs and coastal communities, just as much as protecting marine life from overfishing and significant oil spill destruction.

The National Marine Sanctuaries Program is a critical part of finding that balance, but only if the stakeholders in the GOM are a part of the process. That is why the NMSA law created Advisory Councils of broad stakeholder groups for each sanctuary. For the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS), there are 8 stakeholder groups represented on the council along with non-voting agency representatives. Over 20 men and women that do an amazing job of educating and listening to one another to collaborate in developing solutions. Federal management in the GOM is much better for the dedication and commitment of its SAC members.

In 2007, the SAC recommended a boundary expansion (now called "Alternative # 2") that is over 100 square miles smaller

than NOAA Preferred Alternative # 3 recommended today. The current SAC is working cooperatively to make an additional boundary expansion recommendation, anticipated in 2017. Sadly, we have been marginalized in the current process. In February 2015, the NEPA process caused ONMS staff to go behind closed doors to develop the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and recommendations. This should be amended to have SAC members involved in the DEIS development. The 2007 SAC recommended the addition of 6 banks with a slight alteration of the existing 3; but, staff's Preferred Alternative added 6 additional banks to the 2007 recommendation with more arbitrary boundaries encompassing twice as much area. Leaving many areas off limits to fishing and drilling as it was proposed. Petroleum leasing of these areas must continue to be allowed as well; since as the salt domes push up thru the earth and trap petroleum reserves at high angles on their flanks. Considering the high demand of crude oil per year, we might want to preserve drilling access to all these GOM areas basin wide. Providing American-sourced petroleum to our people and economy.

Inter-agency coordinations for platforms to be reefed-in-place is consistently delayed, often over 2 years. When finally reefed-in-place hopefully late this summer, HI-A-389 will be the first artificial reef in a national marine sanctuary. We are excited to see this platform become success story in artificial reefing, home to many thousands of marine creatures.

In my view, and recommended by Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, the areas known as BOEM-BSEE's "No

Activity Zones” (NAZs), could be the limits of any boundary expansion. New improvements and technologies of synthetic, more biodegradable drilling fluids allow for a dramatic improvement over the impacts seen in the past and reduce adverse impacts within these zones. Fishing and petroleum development can easily continue to co-exist with the marine life on and surrounding these banks.

Lastly, I hope you will study and embrace both the SAC recommendations of 2007 and 2017, and thereby help us help you make the best decisions on boundary expansion, when the Commerce Secretary makes his final formal recommendation to the Congress.

Thank you for inviting me to testify. This has been an honor and a humbling experience to testify before our US Senate. It would be both a great honor and a privilege to answer any of your questions.