

[redacted], 2024

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
John Armor
Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
sanctuary.nominations@noaa.gov

Re: Support for Consideration of a Cashes Ledge National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Armor,

[Organization] writes to express support for the nomination of the Proposed Cashes Ledge National Marine Sanctuary to protect the Cashes Ledge Area. [1-2 sentences about your organization].

[Describe in a few sentences how this impacts you and/or your organization specifically.]

Located 90 miles off New England’s coast in the heart of the Gulf of Maine, Cashes Ledge is an extraordinary undersea mountain range and one of the most unique ecological structures in U.S. ocean waters. Home to myriad, and often vulnerable marine species and habitats, a sanctuary designation in this area would help conserve and protect the extraordinary and vulnerable marine wildlife and habitats of the Cashes Ledge Area, provide unparalleled scientific research and education opportunities, and build climate resilience in a region that is among the fastest warming in the world’s oceans.

The Proposed Sanctuary harbors a treasure trove of marine life living among the peaks valleys of the Cashes Ledge, Parker Ridge, and Sigsbee Ridge formations, along with portions of the ecologically inter-connected adjacent deep Cashes and Ammen basins. This area supports a rich biodiversity of habitats and marine life. Cashes Ledge contains all of the bottom types typical of the offshore Gulf of Maine and atop its highest peak, on Ammen Rock, lies the deepest, densest cold-water kelp forest on the eastern seaboard. Cashes Ledge’s diverse habitats ranging from lush kelp to rocky outcroppings and deep muddy basins, provide refuge for a remarkable diversity of marine life, from the Atlantic wolffish and the rare blue sponge to the unusual red cod.

As the Gulf of Maine is overheating, with water temperatures rising faster than 97% of the global ocean, the Proposed Sanctuary’s still largely intact benthic habitats and diversity constitute one of the most comprehensive opportunities for biodiversity and climate-stewardship in the Gulf of Maine. The Proposed Sanctuary will celebrate the region’s rich natural heritage, create a refuge for vulnerable marine life as well as biodiversity generally, and provide opportunities for research and to enhance understanding of climate change impacts in the Gulf of Maine, as well as numerous education and collaboration opportunities for New Englander’s to foster a connection to the Area.

[Organization] supports the inclusion of a Fully Protected Area within the Proposed Sanctuary to safeguard biodiversity, the kelp forest, and adjacent, interconnected habitats. Amidst a changing

climate that is impacting the Gulf of Maine in ways we are only beginning to understand, the scientific value and ecological importance of fully protecting this Cashes Ledge sub-area as a biodiversity refuge and a living laboratory and oceanographic research platform is vital.

[Organization] appreciates that the designation of a National Marine Sanctuary is a multi-step public process that provides multiple opportunities for stakeholder engagement at each phase to ensure community-based decision-making and collaboration. The designation of Cashes Ledge as a sanctuary should include a robust process for engagement of the public and stakeholders in the protection of this extraordinary public resource.

From Cashes Ledge's lush kelp to rocky outcroppings and deep muddy basins that provide an underwater oasis teeming with biodiverse marine life, securing long-lasting protections for this unique ocean wonder is vital in our rapidly changing marine environment.

[Organization] supports this nomination and urges you to add Cashes Ledge to the Sanctuary Inventory List and to initiate the public process for its designation as a National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURES]