



July 29, 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: Cashes Ledge National Marine Sanctuary

Director Armor,

On behalf of Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), as well as a diverse coalition of supporters, I hereby submit the attached proposal and letters of support to nominate the Cashes Ledge Area as a National Marine Sanctuary.

In the heart of the Gulf of Maine lies an extraordinary undersea mountain range and one of the most unique ecological structures in U.S. Ocean waters. This 32-mile underwater mountain range harbors a treasure trove of marine life living among its peaks and valleys – Cashes Ledge, Parker Ridge, Sigsbee Ridge, and Cashes and Ammen Basins (“Cashes Ledge Area”). The Cashes Ledge Area contains all of the seafloor types typical of the offshore Gulf of Maine, each supporting a rich and remarkable diversity of marine life. On the top and flanks of Ammen Rock, the area’s highest peak, lies the densest cold-water kelp forest on the eastern seaboard. The diverse habitats of the Cashes Ledge Area, ranging from lush kelp to rocky outcroppings to deep muddy basins, provide refuge for an astounding diversity of marine life, from the Atlantic wolffish to the rare blue sponge to the unusual red cod.

The Cashes Ledge Area warrants protection to ensure that its intricately connected habitats and unique ecosystem can continue to serve as a reserve of ocean biodiversity, productivity, and an offshore ocean laboratory for scientific research. With the Gulf of Maine warming faster than 97% of the world’s oceans, the largely intact habitats and communities of the Cashes Ledge Area constitute a key opportunity for biodiversity and climate stewardship.

Enclosed with this email you will find:

- The Nomination of the Cashes Ledge National Marine Sanctuary
- Letters of support from a diverse range of supporters including from the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, regional and national conservation and environmental



organizations, youth serving organizations, faith-based organizations, scientists, education organizations and arts programs, whale watching and other recreational businesses and birding and diving clubs, as well as individual New Englanders.

We look forward to continuing to build support and partnerships and gaining input around the designation of a Cashes Ledge Sanctuary.

Designating the Cashes Ledge Area as a National Marine Sanctuary would help preserve and protect its extraordinary and vulnerable wildlife and habitats. Permanently protecting the area would also provide unparalleled scientific research and education opportunities and build climate resilience in a region that is among the fastest warming in the world's ocean.

Thank you for the opportunity to nominate the Cashes Ledge Area as a National Marine Sanctuary. CLF respectfully urges you to expeditiously add the Cashes Ledge National Marine Sanctuary to the Sanctuary Inventory and initiate the public process for its designation as a National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Priscilla M. Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Priscilla M. Brooks, Ph.D.

Vice President, Ocean Conservation
Conservation Law Foundation