THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

May 7, 2007

The Honorable Richard B. Cheney
President of the Senate
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Bush Administration, I respectfully submit for congressional consideration and action a bill to reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (CRCA). I also enclose a statement of purpose and need and a detailed section-by-section analysis for the draft bill.

In 2000, Congress enacted the CRCA, which established within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) a Coral Reef Conservation Program to fund coral reef conservation activities directly and through grants to external entities, including states, territories and fishery management councils. The CRCA called for the creation of a National Coral Reef Action Strategy to address the protection of U.S. coral reef ecosystems and promote global conservation of corals. It also provided NOAA with additional authority to undertake a number of activities to understand, manage, and protect coral reef ecosystems.

The purpose of this bill is to reauthorize the Coral Reef Conservation Act through Fiscal Year 2012, and make several amendments that the Department of Commerce believes are necessary to implement effectively the objectives of the CRCA. The proposed changes will clarify the need for coral reef protection, provide tools for stronger partnerships, and make several technical and clarifying amendments. The most significant change adds authorities to address damage to coral reefs by providing authorization for funds to be set aside into an emergency response fund, making parties responsible for damage to reefs liable for the costs of response and restoration, and providing NOAA with various enforcement authorities.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to enact this legislation. We have been advised by the Office of Management and Budget that there is no objection to the submission of this draft bill and that its enactment would be in accord with the program of the President. If you have any further questions, please contact me or Nat Wienecke, Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, at 202-482-3663.

Sincerely,

Carlos M. Gutierrez

Enclosures

Identical Letters Sent to:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader, Senate

The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer
Majority Leader, House

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader, Senate

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Republican Leader, House

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chair, Senate Commerce Committee

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, Jr.
Chair, House Natural Resources Committee

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Co-Chair, Senate Commerce Committee

The Honorable Don Young
Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee