ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 23

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman EDWARD H. THOMSON
District 30 (Monmouth and Ocean)

SYNOPSIS

Opposes designation of Hudson Canyon as national marine sanctuary.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION opposing the designation of the Hudson Canyon as a national marine sanctuary.

WHEREAS, The Hudson Canyon is a submarine canyon that begins from the shallow outlet of the estuary at the mouth of the Hudson River and extends out over 400 miles seaward across the continental shelf, finally connecting to the deep ocean basin at a depth of up to 2.5 miles below sea level; and

WHEREAS, The Hudson Canyon and surrounding waters are home to some of the most commercially valuable species on the U.S. Atlantic Coast, including sea scallops and American lobster which, in 2014, were valued at nearly $1 billion; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, commercial fisheries in the Hudson Canyon area produced approximately $31.5 million worth of scallops, $4 million in longfin squid, $6.3 million in summer flounder, $1.8 million in scup, $1.8 million in black sea bass, and $1.7 million in golden tilefish, contributing over $48 million to local economies; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in 2013 there were more than 130,600 jobs in New Jersey tied directly to the ocean economy, 69 percent of which were in the tourism and recreation sector; and

WHEREAS, In order to preserve the economic and ecological value of the Hudson Canyon region, extensive regulatory strategies have been implemented to ensure sustainable fishing practices, including the participation of State, regional, and national entities in the development of species-specific catch limits, fishing seasons, and other restrictions on commercial and recreational fishing; and

WHEREAS, In addition to fishing restrictions, in 2015 the regional Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council approved comprehensive deep sea coral protection in the submarine canyons along the Continental Shelf, including the Hudson Canyon; and

WHEREAS, Although the Hudson Canyon area is already subject to a complex web of environmental and economic protections, the Wildlife Conservation Society's New York Aquarium (N.Y. Aquarium) has nominated the Hudson Canyon for selection as a national marine sanctuary, which would add additional, and redundant, environmental protections; and

WHEREAS, While the N.Y. Aquarium's nomination proposal claims to support continued fishing in the Hudson Canyon area, there is no assurance that fishing will be permitted once the designation is granted since the federal law governing marine sanctuaries, the "National Marine Sanctuaries Act," provides that the governing body of a sanctuary will have final say on fishing restrictions, and does not require input from members of the local fishing industry; and

WHEREAS, In light of the critical economic importance of the commercial and recreational fishing industry in the Hudson Canyon area and the existence of substantial and adequate environmental

protections, designation of Hudson Canyon as a national marine sanctuary is inappropriate, unnecessary, and potentially devastating to the State and local economies; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. This House respectfully opposes the designation of the Hudson Canyon as a national marine sanctuary and urges the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to reject the nomination proposal submitted by the Wildlife Conservation Society's New York Aquarium.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

STATEMENT

This resolution opposes the designation of the Hudson Canyon as a national marine sanctuary.

In light of the critical economic importance of the commercial and recreational fishing industry in the Hudson Canyon area and the existence of substantial and adequate environmental protections, designation of Hudson Canyon as a national marine sanctuary is inappropriate, unnecessary, and potentially devastating to the State and local economies.