Scientists support Marianas Trench UNESCO nomination

(Press Release) — Early this December, the National Park Service announced that the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument made the short list for UNESCO World Heritage designation.

Though hidden beneath the water’s surface, the Mariana Trench, a unique geologic and ecologic landmark and a natural treasure, dwarfs the Grand Canyon in scale and scope.

Recently, a cohort of 55 members of the deep-sea research community, representing 46 institutions and 19 nations, delivered a letter in support of the nomination.

“The Marianas Trench is one of the most well-known and spectacular geological features on the planet,” said Dr. Andrew Thaler, who recently visited the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam. “Global recognition is long overdue.”

The Mariana Trench is more than a mile deeper than Mt. Everest is high and hosts Challenger Deep, the deepest point on Earth. It is also home to numerous sites of exceptional scientific value, including submerged volcanoes that host deep-sea hydrothermal vents, the largest documented mud volcanoes, coral atolls and fringing reef ecosystems that support apex predators like sharks and whales, as well as habitat-forming stony corals.

The Marianas Trench Marine National Monument would be the first World Heritage site to include unexplored ecosystems, including geologically active sites that promise new species, scientific discoveries, and insight into biological processes in the deepest ecosystem on earth.