Like the Sierras... only deep underwater... 45 to 185 miles off of California’s coast... a series of undersea volcanoes millions of years old stretches across the bottom of the ocean. Known as “seamounts,” these mountains rise as high as 12,000 feet above the ocean floor. Seamounts host 500-year-old corals and vivid deep-water sponges, as well as seabirds, endangered sperm whales and sea turtles. These unique places also serve as a vital frontier for scientific discovery.

On July 14, 2016, U.S. Representatives Sam Farr (D-Calif.) and Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) introduced the California Seamounts and Ridges National Marine Conservation Area Designation and Management Act (H.R. 5797) to safeguard some of these special places.

While remote, seamounts and the marine wildlife they support are vulnerable to human impacts.

Resource extraction – The seabed is believed to hold large quantities of energy resources, as well as precious metals and minerals. Mining companies once proposed to lease 70,000 square miles at Gorda Ridge to extract gold, silver, copper and zinc. That idea was abandoned, but new technologies make deep-sea mining and exploration increasingly possible. Exploration at these seamounts would destroy the fragile, living habitats and food webs that rely upon them.

Fishing – The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) recognizes the importance of these places, and has prohibited bottom trawling in some areas. But these regulations are not permanent and still allow potentially damaging gear.

Climate change – Rapid change is already occurring due to warming waters and ocean acidification. Irreversible damage can easily occur before we fully understand the true value of these places.

The California Seamounts and Ridges National Marine Conservation Act

This legislation would create a National Marine Conservation Area to preserve the ecological and cultural value of these places and ensure a legacy of ocean protection into the future. With only 1% of the deep-sea habitats off California permanently protected, we have an opportunity today to safeguard these sites before it’s too late.

The proposed legislation states that boundaries and regulations would be determined through robust consultation with tribes, the PFMC, fishermen and other stakeholders. Sport fishing, commercially-licensed charter boat fishing and hook-and-line albacore fishing would continue throughout.

H.R. 5797 calls for prior, timely and ongoing notice and consultation with tribes, and states that the Conservation Area shall not impact traditional tribal uses.

Cortes and Tanner Banks and the eastern portion of Mendocino Ridge would not be included in the Conservation Area, but would be protected from future exploration, development and mining.
An underwater mountain range
Each site has a story...

**Gorda Ridge**
Gorda Ridge not only hosts sea creatures specially adapted to deep-sea hot springs, but may even hold clues to the origins of life on Earth.

**Guide Seamount**
Guide Seamount attracts seabirds from colonies at the nearby Farallon Islands – but also provides a landing place for birds migrating from New Zealand!

**Rodriguez Seamount**
Rodriguez Seamount, an ancient island between 7 and 11 million years old, sits 2,000 feet below the ocean’s surface and harbors complex and fragile deep-sea corals that may live up to 500 years.

**Cortes Bank**
A hundred miles off the coast of southern California, Cortes Bank rises to within a few feet of the ocean’s surface, creating waves the height of a 10-story building – a Mount Everest of surfing.

Support the California Seamounts and Ridges National Marine Conservation Area Designation and Management Act (H.R. 5797) to safeguard some of these special places.