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September 30, 2020

Dear Nancy and the Nominations Committee,

Since my first GCFI experience in 2001, I have valued GCFI's friendly annual meetings, ongoing web support and valuable networking mechanisms. I have attended 9 of the 10 meetings over the past decade, and have been proud to continue Bermuda's long association with the GCFI Board for the past five years. I enjoy my work with the Board, I am honoured by your nomination for the position of vice chair, and I am writing to confirm my interest in standing for this position in November.

An important aspect of GCFI is that the Board does not view it as a static institution, but rather works to make sure that the services it provides are continually evolving to meet the varied needs of members from the diverse Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean region. The diversity of my past and present research, as well as my connections with the research and management sectors in Bermuda, has allowed me to contribute to GCFI initiatives addressing emerging issues such as lionfish, Sargassum and coral health. On the other hand, I have been pleased to share the resources provided via GCFI's hosting of the Caribbean node of the Global Program on Marine Litter with colleagues working in this field in Bermuda. In this year of public health risks and restricted movement, GCFI has risen to the challenge, advising members on COVID-related issues and reaching out to the community online, particularly students. Importantly, the board has worked together to adapt the annual conference for current conditions. I would aim to help continue and build on this approach, and I believe my broad range of experiences allows me to contribute useful perspectives in this regard.

GCFI provides one of the most positive conference experiences for students that I have encountered. I have enjoyed being part of the Student Awards Committee and believe that I have made a useful contribution in this area by helping with judging the student awards and contributing to the student experience at GCFI by organizing the silent auction fundraiser in recent years. I have also been involved in efforts to diversify student opportunities associated with this year's virtual conference, and look forward to incorporating these new formats into future conferences. I also value the new program supporting further training for early career environmental management professionals, which is a good example of GCFI's practical and inclusive approach.

In previous years, I have contributed to the organization of the annual conference by assisting with the selection of abstracts for various sessions, and I have moderated the session on lionfish for the past few years. This year, I have been involved in the organization of the eposter session, which has been very interesting. I think the choice of the innovative Learning Toolbox platform for eposters exemplifies GCFI's continually evolving approach and ability to take advantage of new technologies. I am excited to work with this platform in the future.

My work with the Sustainability Committee is has been important to me, and I am pleased with the progress we have made in this area. Sustainability is now under the Communications Committee, so I have been learning more about that aspect of GCFI as well. I have also served on other committees with a more practical focus, and am aware of the importance of this less glamorous work to the continued functioning of GCFI. I appreciate the opportunity to serve this important regional institution in an expanded role, and confirm my commitment to attend the annual meetings and participate in intersessional work as needed.

Sincerely,



Joanna M. Pitt, Ph.D.

Marine Resources Officer, Department of Environment and Natural Resources