

EXPAND PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

He Pu'uhonua no Hawai'i  A Sanctuary for our Ocean Heritage

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Hawai'i Island Coalition Urges Governor Ige to Support Papahānaumokuākea Expansion

More than 67,000 letters and petitions of support are delivered to Governor's island office

HILO, HAWAII – Today, a diverse coalition delivered more than 67,000 letters and petitions in support of the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea to the Hilo office of the Governor. This group included Native Hawaiians, young children representing the next generation, and Senator Russell E. Ruderman (Senate District 2: Kea'au, Pahoā, Kalapana, Kapoho, Kurtistown, Mountain View, Glenwood, Volcano, Pahala).

“I am very excited about the possibility of greatly expanding the marine monument. This would be the largest marine protected area in the world, and will inspire other countries to protect large portions of our oceans,” said Senator Ruderman. “After many years of overfishing and pollution, such sanctuaries will help our oceans and our fisheries recover their health.”

On April 5, 2016 the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Working Group wrote the White House Council on Environmental Quality to expand Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

The proposal calls for expanding Papahānaumokuākea from 50 nautical miles to the 200 nautical mile limit of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with exception for the waters surrounding the islands of Ni'ihau and Kaua'i, which should remain outside of the monument boundaries, as well as two important weather buoys for small-boat fishermen. To ensure proper care for Native Hawaiian cultural resources in the monument, the President is also being asked to designate the Office of Hawaiian Affairs as a co-trustee on the management committee.

“Supporting the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea, the protection of our sacred deep ocean realms and the very special life-forms that dwell there, is a win for Hawai'i and the world,” said Kealoha Pisciotta, a member of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group. “This is a true pu'uuhonua (sanctuary) and a legacy for our children.”

There are significant resources of scientific value that would benefit from expanded protections. Highly migratory or far-ranging species such as sea turtles, whales, dolphins, seabirds, sharks, and tuna forage outside of the area of the existing monument. Additionally, in the 10 years since the original monument designation, scientific expeditions outside of the current monument boundaries and within the proposed expansion area have discovered high density communities in which most of the animals seen are completely unknown to science, making a compelling case for expansion. This includes black corals, which are estimated at more than 4,500 years old, and described as the old growth redwood forests of the ocean.

“This part of the Pacific represents a perfect region for large-scale protection,” said Dr. Richard Pyle, Associate Zoologist in Ichthyology, Department of Natural Sciences, Bishop Museum. “Because of the span in latitude, it represents a buffer to ocean warming and serves as a reservoir for species threatened in more tropical regions. The monument expansion will help ensure safe passage for larvae of corals, fishes, and other reef-associated species and help recolonize reefs devastated by the effects of climate change.”

Still photos available here: <http://bit.ly/ExpandPMNMphotos>

Videos available here: <http://bit.ly/ExpandPMNMvids>

All photos and videos taken in areas outside the current boundaries of PMNM, in the area that is being considered for possible Monument expansion.

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