

EXPAND PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

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

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Maui Coalition Urges Governor Ige to Support Papahānaumokuākea Expansion

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

WAILUKU, MAUI – Today, a diverse coalition delivered more than 67,000 letters and petitions in support of the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea to the Maui office of the Governor. This group included Native Hawaiians, local fishermen, and as a representative of Maui Mayor Alan Arakawa's office, environmental coordinator, Rob Parsons.

"Though vast and perhaps once considered inexhaustible, the Pacific Ocean is suffering from multiple stresses which will become more dire without additional conservation efforts," says, Rob Parsons, Maui County's Environmental Coordinator. "I can think of no better way to celebrate World Ocean's Day than by standing in support of expansion of the protected waters and unique eco-systems surrounding our Northwestern Hawaiian Islands."

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.

"I fully support the expansion because policy makers must do all we can to ensure a sustainable future," says Rep. Kaniela Ing. "Many of Hawai'i's fish and marine animals are under threat of depletion, which could devastate our broader ecosystems and environment."

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.

“Our kupuna fished the ocean for thousands of years, invented fishpond systems, and utilized fishing rest area practices,” said Jay Carpio, a fisherman from Wailuku. “As Hawaiians it’s time to be bold and continue to be a leader in securing marine resource abundance for future generations. It’s time to expand Papahānaumokuākea.”

The statewide, community-driven effort includes a diverse coalition of kupuna (elders), fishermen, educators, cultural practitioners, non-profits, community groups, scientists, religious organizations, veterans, and many others across the Hawaiian Islands, and beyond.

“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 of ocean life: <http://bit.ly/ExpandPMNMphotos>

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

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

All photos and videos should be credited as follows: *Video courtesy of the NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, Hohonu Moana.*

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