

April 5, 2016

Christy Goldfuss
Managing Director
White House Council on Environmental Quality
Executive Office of the President

Dear Ms. Goldfuss,

We write as representatives of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (CWG) to request a meeting to discuss our strong support for expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The CWG has been in existence since 2000, originally part of the Reserve Advisory Council for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, and now under the Monument Management Board for the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. We are made up of 50 individuals located across all the main Hawaiian Islands and each with a strong tie to Papahānaumokuākea. Our members include Hawaiian kūpuna (elders), researchers, educators, community organizers, advocates, as well as cultural practitioners.

On Friday, March 25 the CWG met to discuss and vote on options for expansion of the monument. Without objections, the CWG membership enthusiastically approved a proposal to expand Papahānaumokuākea out to the full 200 nautical mile limit of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with exception to the waters surrounding the islands of Niʻihau and Kauaʻi, which should remain outside of the monument boundaries.

This Native Hawaiian proposal for expanding the existing monument comes at a critical time when pollution, overfishing and climate change are seriously damaging the health of our ocean. A growing body of science is showing that large, fully protected marine reserves and sanctuaries are more resilient to climate change and therefore have emerged as important to mitigating the impacts of our warming planet and Native Hawaiian way of life. Further, expanding Papahānaumokuākea as we propose will protect significant cultural and natural resources outside the current monument area.

The Hawaiian Archipelago, including the vast ocean that surrounds it, represents the framework of our cosmology. These islands were birthed from the ocean depths and beginning in the east, the youngest and most robust Hawaiian Island is found, where the sun also rises to give life. Travelling up the island chain, the islands leave the extent of the sun's northern advance at the Tropic of Cancer, where they become remnants of their physical form and eventually return to the dark ocean depths again. Papahānaumokuākea represents an immense spiritual realm of our people where our ancestors return to upon passing on. The CWG believes – as many Native Hawaiians – that natural resources are cultural resources; therefore the ecological foundation for expansion is also a cultural rationale.

Finally, we also propose that the Office of Hawaiian Affairs be elevated to a Co-Trustee of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Our people should have full participation in management decisions for the marine environment that is intrinsic to our culture, especially Papahānaumokuākea, where we believe life began.

Improving the health of our ocean is one of the greatest challenges humanity will face and will require leadership from the United States if we are to succeed. Expanding Papahānaumokuākea is the biggest single step that President Obama can take to leave future generations a healthier ocean and perpetuate Native Hawaiian culture.

We invite you to our islands to further discuss the potential for monument expansion and to hear from and talk directly to the various stakeholders and the Native Hawaiian community.

Mahalo for your consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kekuewa Kikiloi". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kekuewa Kikiloi, Ph.D.

Chair, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group

cc: Brian Deese, Senior Advisor to the President, White House Executive Office
The Honorable David Ige, Governor of the State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i State Legislature
Hawai'i Congressional Delegation
Suzanne Case, Chair, Department of Land and Natural Resources, State of Hawai'i
The Honorable Sally Jewel, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Penny Pritzker, Secretary of Commerce
Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans & Atmosphere and NOAA
Administrator