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August 2, 2016

President Barack Obama
c/o Honolulu Services Center
Pier 38, Honolulu Harbor
1139 N. Nimitz Hwy., Suite 220
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96817

Re: Comments on the Expansion of Papahānaūmokuākea

Dear President Obama:

I submit my comments on this last day because I debated whether my comments would be of any assistance to you in arriving at your decision. I finally decided to submit because in the four years that I served in Congress (all during the time of your Presidency), I found you to be thoughtful, analytical, and fair.

Mr. President, I am fourth generation from Oahu's Wai'anae Coast, a statement that would mean nothing to any President but you. My paternal grandfather was the fisherman of the Wai'anae Plantation. In those days, that meant he caught the fish and sold only to the plantation owned store. My father, uncles, cousins, brothers and I fished the coast with a deep sense of respect and understanding of our duty to the environment. We fished for specific species only during certain times of the year, and used only certain poles to ensure that the fish had the opportunity to outsmart us—which they did, many times. We were not allowed to use wire leaders because bringing the fish up from the coral reefs was also part of the challenge. Today, those practices would likely put us in the conservationist category. I still consider it a matter of respect and balance.

My grandfather, though Japanese with not an ounce of Hawaiian blood, had an innate and intimate respect for what we would today consider native customs. Called "Sampan Joe" by the plantation lunas, he was one of those who lost his livelihood and sampan in WWII when he was sent to an internment camp in New Mexico. Though not schooled in Hawaiian culture and customs, my grandfather had a deep sense of things like the sacredness of Kaena Point. He told me the lighting and the waves are different at Kaena and you do not disrespect it; I later learned that the Point was considered the "jumping off point for the souls."

Coming from that background, I write in opposition to the expansion of Papahānaūmokuākea. I was a member of Congress when you expanded the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument in 2014 to 491,000 square miles. However, to now use the Antiquities Act to expand Papahānaūmokuākea from about 140,000 square miles to over 625,000

President Barack Obama
August 2, 2016
Page 2 of 2

square miles, without any compelling proof that Papahānaumokuākea has not done an adequate job of protecting the area, can result in an imbalance.

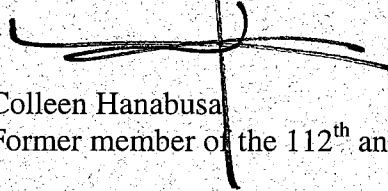
As it now stands, Papahānaumokuākea has specific designated areas that provide further protection within the Monument. These areas are designated “Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas” and “Areas to be avoided.” Statements have been made that these designated areas will provide a “greater buffer,” but there is no statement that the area is in danger without the expansion.

The existing balance is with the fisherman, military, trades, and others who use the area. After ten years, they have adjusted and demonstrate their respect for the Monument designated area; a balance that is accepted and respected by all is how we preserve for the future. Given that balance, and the danger that expansion could undue much or all of the good that has been achieved until now, I feel compelled to voice my opposition.

I also note that former Senator Daniel K. Akaka was a strong proponent of having the World Conservation Congress in Hawai‘i. For the four years I was in Congress and the two since his retirement, I was a proponent with him and for him. I now join Senator Akaka, along with former Hawai‘i Governors George Ariyoshi and Ben Cayetano, to ask that you not expand Papahānaumokuākea.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Aloha and Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colleen Hanabusa', written over a vertical line that extends from the text above.

Colleen Hanabusa
Former member of the 112th and 113th Congress