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Editorial | Island Voices

# Bid to expand Papahānaumokuākea must be public, transparent process

By Daniel K. Akaka and George R. Ariyoshi

Posted July 31, 2016

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We oppose the proposed expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM).

It is unconscionable that such a significant policy might be enacted with a profound lack of transparency and public process.

This is disturbing and has caused many people in Hawaii to question the motives behind the proposal.

We understand that, at the urging of special interests, President Barack Obama's administration is considering using the U.S. Antiquities Act of 1906 to extend the PMNM from its current 50 mile offshore perimeter to 200 miles offshore around the North-western Hawaiian Islands.

The U.S. Antiquities Act excludes any consideration and validation by the U.S. Congress and the state of Hawaii and its Native Hawaiian residents.

This would be a presidential proclamation for an extended federal monument. If it increases to 200 miles offshore, then that amounts to a 350 percent expansion from 140,000 square miles to 583,000 square miles. The size of the proposed PMNM expansion at 200 miles is equivalent to the combined land area of the states of California, Oregon, Washington and Texas.

We are no longer in office. We simply care about the people of Hawaii and are concerned about the future of our state.

The proposed PMNM expansion could affect the rights of Native Hawaiians, the residents and businesses of Hawaii, and our state's right to govern its own natural resources.

The ripple effect of the expansion on Hawaii's economy could cost jobs and increase costs to consumers. For these reasons, a basic economic impact study should be conducted.

Hawaii is a unique state. It consists of small islands surrounded by a vast ocean, and the water is an extension of our state.

We depend on the ocean for food, employment, recreation and the perpetuity of Native Hawaiian culture.

We have demonstrated our passion for, and commitment to, responsible stewardship of our coastal waters.

Hawaii is the only state that has met Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls for the protection of 10 percent of coastal and marine areas by 2020. In addition, nearly 23 percent of the waters surrounding Hawaii are no-take reserves where fishing is prohibited, which is a greater percentage than scientists recommend protecting to maintain healthy oceans.

A PMNM expansion of this magnitude would include the entire U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. (The proclamation would not affect the EEZ around the main Hawaiian Islands.)

In other words, U.S. fishing vessels would have no territorial advantage. They would be forced out of the EEZ into international waters, where fishing vessels from all over the world are free to fish today.

Protecting our environment is our highest priority. The care of our land and ocean should be the responsibility of the state of Hawaii.

We need an open, honest dialogue about the impact of the proposed expansion.

How will it really affect Hawaii culturally, socially and economically?

We must think through the consequences of such an important policy issue before making decisions that will affect our state as a whole.

We were honored to serve the wonderful people of Hawaii while in office, and we continue to care for them.

The federal government should not rush into a decision about expanding the PMNM without thinking through the consequences and providing the requisite transparency for Hawaii and its people before considering the expansion.

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**Daniel K. Akaka was a U.S. Senator from Hawaii from 1990 to 2013. George R. Ariyoshi served as governor of Hawaii from 1974 to 1986.**

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