



PACIFIC
ISLANDS
FISHERIES
GROUP

March 7, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Aloha from the 50th State – an island community whose culture and traditions are deeply seated in our ocean and marine resources. On behalf of the Pacific Islands Fisheries Group (PIFG), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, I am writing you today to express concern about the recent letter sent to you from some members of the Hawaiian community asking for the expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument from its existing 50 nm to include the entire 200 nm of our northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI). This expansion will increase fishery closures in the Hawaii EEZ from 24% to 77%. Three fourths of our Hawaii EEZ will be closed to fishing! In no way should you interpret that letter to represent the desired interest of the broader fishing, seafood and ocean-going community in our State.

PIFG's mission is to facilitate communication and participation amongst all marine resource users to support sound resource use, management, research, conservation and education. Our network includes local recreational, commercial and subsistence fishermen, fishing tackle dealers and distributors and others across the State who support responsible fishing.

If the Monument were to be expanded, it would significantly impact one of the most sustainably managed and environmentally responsible fisheries in the world. The Hawaii longline fishery operates outside of the 50 nm closure of the Papahānaumokuākea Monument in the NWHI and protected species zone around the main Hawaiian Islands, eliminating interactions with Hawaiian monk seals. It scored a grade of 94% on the UN FAO fishing code of conduct for responsible fishing, the highest of any fishery. It has successfully mitigated interactions with protected sea turtles, seabirds and marine mammals. But most importantly, this fishery anchors the local production of seafood consumed (40%) here in the islands. In contrast, only ten percent of the seafood consumed on the mainland is domestically produced.

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Fishing and seafood is rooted in our island traditions and culture. Waves of immigrants from other Pacific islands and Asian cultures have strengthened our bond to the sea. Today, we consume more than three times more seafood per capita than our mainland counterparts. Expanding the Monument will only decrease our local food security, while economically impacting the 'mom and pop' fishing operations forcing us to import seafood from less sustainable and environmentally friendly sources.

Finally, asking the citizens of Hawaii to carry the national burden for the US in marine closures is unconscionable. This is especially troubling when the proposed closures will provide no additional benefits to marine conservation. PIFG is on the record in 2006 calling into question the original provisions of the NWHI National Monument as hastily formulated, arbitrary, not grounded in science and developed without fair input from the fishing public. We urged President Bush to allow for continued management of NWHI under the open and public process of the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. Now, in 2016, we urge you to not support the expansion of the Monument from 50 to 200 nm. Management and conservation efforts should be promulgated through existing authorities and not circumvented by the Antiquities Act.

Mahalo,

Neil Kanemoto
PIFG President

Board Members

Nathan Abe, Kona, Hawaii. Commercial Fisherman
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Dean Sensui, Pearl City, Hawaii, Hawaii Goes Fishing
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Cc: Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Maize Hirono
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