



HAWAII SEAFOOD COUNCIL

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March 25, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

Re: Perspective on expanding the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument from 50 to 200 miles.

I am John Kaneko, Program Manager of the Hawaii Seafood Council, a non-profit organization in Honolulu, Hawaii. HSC's mission includes educating the public about the health benefits, safety and sustainability of Hawaii's seafood and ocean fisheries through education, outreach, training and research. I am writing to ask your help in preserving the rights of Hawaii's people to continue to enjoy the island tradition of eating fresh, locally-caught fish as an essential component of long-term food self-sufficiency and food security in Hawaii.

Specifically, I am writing to provide perspective in opposition to efforts to expand the current boundaries of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument from 50 to 200 miles from shore for the following reasons.

1. If expanded, the entire Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding the Northwest Hawaiian Island (NWHI) chain will be put permanently out of reach for Hawaii's fishers. The only fishing vessels currently operating in the proposed expanded area of the monument are members of the Hawaii pelagic (open ocean) longline fishery that catches fresh world-class tuna, swordfish and associated pelagic fish species.
2. Proponents of expanding the monument are advocating for protections from the Hawaii longline fishery. However, this fishery is managed by NOAA Fisheries and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council and is a model for pelagic fishery management for sustainability. Hawaii's open ocean longline fishers that are among the most-intensively studied, monitored, managed and responsible fishers in the world.
3. The Hawaii Longline Fishery is the world's first fishery to be scored against the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO Code). In 2008, the Hawaii Longline Fishery scored 94% compliance with the FAO Code, the world's only international agreement on what constitutes a responsible fishery capable of producing sustainable wild seafood.
4. The rationale for expanding the current boundaries to protect the coral and nearshore resources from the Hawaii pelagic longline fishery is without merit. The NWHI chain is already fully protected by the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument which currently excludes fishing within 50 miles of shore. The 50-mile longline fishing exclusion zone that exists around the Main Hawaiian Islands and the current Marine National Monument was established by NOAA through the Regional Fishery Management Council process.

5. NOAA scientists and managers have already determined that protection has been achieved for the coral reef habitat, green sea turtles, monk seals, and seabirds that occur close to shore within this 50 mile buffer. Expanding the monument out to 200 miles in the open ocean will not add to these protections because these habitats and species occur mainly nearshore and not in open ocean.
6. Fishing outside of 50 miles, the fishery operates in deep ocean waters, far removed from coral and nearshore habitat without any opportunity to impact bottom substrate and biota. Pelagic longline fishing regulations for this fishery are science-based, precautionary and adaptive to new information. Fishing activity is strictly monitored and managed by NOAA Fisheries with the most extensive federal fishery observer coverage in the international Pacific bigeye tuna fishery.
7. It is also important to note that when the NWHI marine sanctuary and now the monument was established, that Hawaii lost its sustainable bottomfish fishery of only 8 active vessels in the NWHI chain spanning 1,200 miles. By this action, Hawaii lost roughly 50% of its bottomfish fishery production of our famous deep-water snappers (*opakapaka*, *onaga*) and seabass (*hapuupuu*). As a result we have become more dependent on imported fish from less well-managed fisheries.
8. There is a current effort in Hawaii to increase local food production, reduce dependence on food brought to the islands and improve island self-sufficiency and food security. The Hawaii longline fishery is the most important local food production system in Hawaii based on farm-gate or dock-side value. At \$100 million dockside value, it far exceeds any single agricultural food product including sugarcane (soon to be gone), pineapple, macadamia nuts, coffee, papaya and other famous Hawaii food crops.
9. It is only natural that an island state focus on ocean resources as an essential component of its food self-sufficiency equation. Fresh local fish is center-of-the-plate in Hawaii Regional Cuisine, an important component of Hawaii's visitor industry product and core economic driver. Hawaii needs local food products to continue to evolve and be competitive as a world-class food tourism destination.

I conclude that the expanding the monument from 50 to 200 miles off the NWHI will not achieve any discernable added conservation benefit for the coral and nearshore marine resources as proposed. I only foresee a reduction of local food production options and further erosion of public perception of conservation efforts.

I offer this perspective as you weigh the proposed conservation benefits of the possible expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument with the real benefits to the public from preserving this remaining portion of the US EEZ for Hawaii's sustainable wild seafood production and future food security and self-sufficiency.

Thank you very much for taking the time to consider this important island issue.

Sincerely,



John Kaneko MS, DVM
Program Manager

cc. U.S. Senator Brian Schatz
cc. U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono
cc. U.S. Representative Mark Takai
cc. U.S. Representative Tulsi Gabbard