May 5, 2016

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

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the captains and owners representing some of the 120 charter vessels in Hawaii, I am writing to you to consider any further expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (the Monument) from its present 50 nm boundary out to the full extent of the 200 nm EEZ boundary.

In the coming months, you will be bombarded with reasons why this is a good thing for the people of Hawaii, but for which there is little to no scientific foundation. Expansion of the Monument will simply protect mud and silt on the ocean's abyssal plan. The breadth of the current Monument extends 100 nm, isolating the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and the adjacent waters which were exceptional sports-fishing grounds. If the expansion does occur it will encompass a swath of ocean 1,200 nm in length and 400 nm wide.

Hawaii's pelagic fisheries are healthy, and expanding the monument would not have any impacts on improving catch rates or stocks of fish on which we depend to make a living. Arbitrary closing off ocean areas to fishing is a poor management strategy.

The logic behind closing off these waters is like all oases in a desert being put beyond access of the local people. In such circumstances human populations would wither and die away. Likewise, as islanders we recognize that the water around Hawaii and NWHI have their own oases of fish abundance (sometimes call ko'a), like buoys and sea mounts. Without them our fishing opportunities and businesses will diminish and contract. This refers not exclusively to the charter vessel and sports-fishermen but also all small vessel fisheries and the longline fishery.

We respectfully request, Mr. President, that you will take these comments into consideration and not expand the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Sincerely,

Frederick McGrew Rice
Captain of the IHU NUI