

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1104

## Statement by Senator Mazie K. Hirono Proposed expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument August 1-2, 2016

Open debate and transparency are essential when making informed policy decisions. These principles are particularly important as we consider the proposed expansion of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (MNM), using the Antiquities Act as the vehicle for expansion.

In January 2016, I received a copy of a letter signed by seven members of the Native Hawaiian community asking President Obama to start a discussion about expanding the Papahānaumokuākea MNM which would create the largest protected area on Earth. In May, the White House Council on Environmental Quality and other federal agencies came to Hawaii to meet with a number of local stakeholders about a possible expansion of the Monument.

The public meetings taking place on Oahu and Kauai this week will allow the Hawaii community to provide further input. Since this process has been initiated, I have been engaged with stakeholders across the state and they have expressed strong opinions about whether we should expand Papahānaumokuākea MNM. Some have raised environmental concerns, others economic concerns, and still others cultural concerns. Some are in strong support, and some are in strong opposition.

President Obama now has a proposal from Senator Schatz to expand Papahānaumokuākea MNM using the Antiquities Act. The Antiquities Act allows the President to set aside for protection “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest.” Since the Antiquities Act allows Presidential action without a formal process applying federal environmental laws, I appreciate the Obama Administration’s effort to engage the Hawaii community in the decision making process.

As recently as today, I spoke with the Managing Director of the Council on Environmental Quality and we both agreed that listening to Hawaii’s people through these public meetings is important. We agreed to connect again after the public meetings.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide key input to the President on his decision. The Administration’s analysis should include projections regarding the management resources and tools that will be needed to effectively administer an expanded area, the technical and scientific benefits of such an expansion, and economic considerations.

While there is no requirement that federal agencies make their analyses available to the public before any final decision by the President under the Antiquities Act, I believe it would serve the public’s interest for this information to be made available. Access to the same information will enable all of us to understand the basis for the President’s decision on the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea MNM, especially as his decision will permanently affect livelihoods and our environment in Hawaii.

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