

# Big Environmental Groups Continue to Prey Upon Hawaii Fishing Grounds

by Eric Kingma, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council

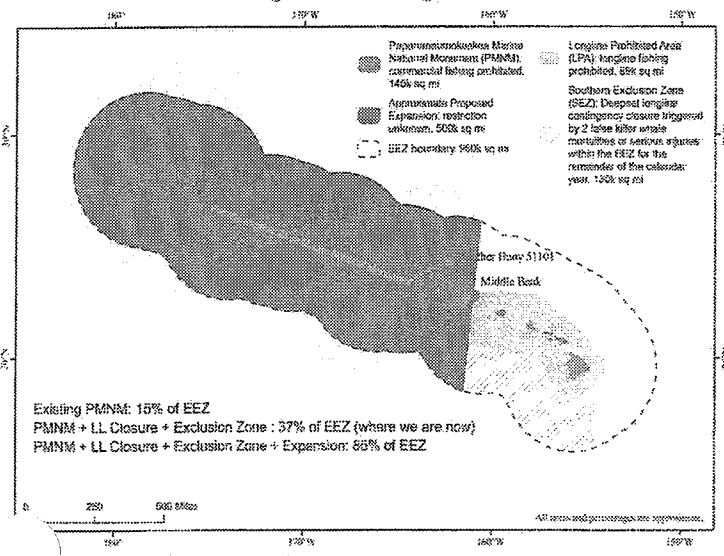
What do Large Scale Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and faape have in common? They seem to be continuing to expand uncontrollably in Hawaii. If you haven't heard, a group of seven native Hawaiians have recently requested that President Obama expand the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM) from 50 nautical miles (nm) to 200 nm in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHIs). Orchestrating this initiative is the Washington D.C.-based Pew Charitable Trusts Global Ocean Legacy program, which is feeding misinformation to the public that this expansion will protect seabirds, sharks, sea turtles, monk seals, marine mammals, and tunas and will make Hawaii more resilient to climate change. The truth is that these marine species are already protected and/or range well beyond the NWHI. Closing the area will not have any benefits to their populations. As for climate change resiliency, the only fishing occurring in the proposed monument expansion area is the Hawaii longline fishery and small scale troll and bottomfishing by Kauai fishermen—these fisheries pose zero threats to ecosystems that may be affected by climate change (e.g. coral reefs).

Over the past 10 years, massive area closures in US waters have been established in the Pacific, starting Bush's 2006 proclamation to establish the PMNM, which he followed in 2009 with the establishment of the Marianas Trench, Pacific Remote Islands, Rose Atoll monuments. In 2014, President Obama expanded the Pacific Remote Island MNM, created the US Pacific Islands' largest collection of MPAs. No other marine monuments exist in the US Pacific Islands and Hawaii. Collectively, the US Pacific monuments comprise nearly 30% of the US EEZ in the Pacific Island Region, which meets the so called World Parks Congress' "30% goal" to close off at least 30% of the ocean (including the high seas) to fishing by 2030. So we have to ask ourselves, what is to gain by expanding the PMNM and how it will affect Hawaii fisheries, seafood markets, and food security.

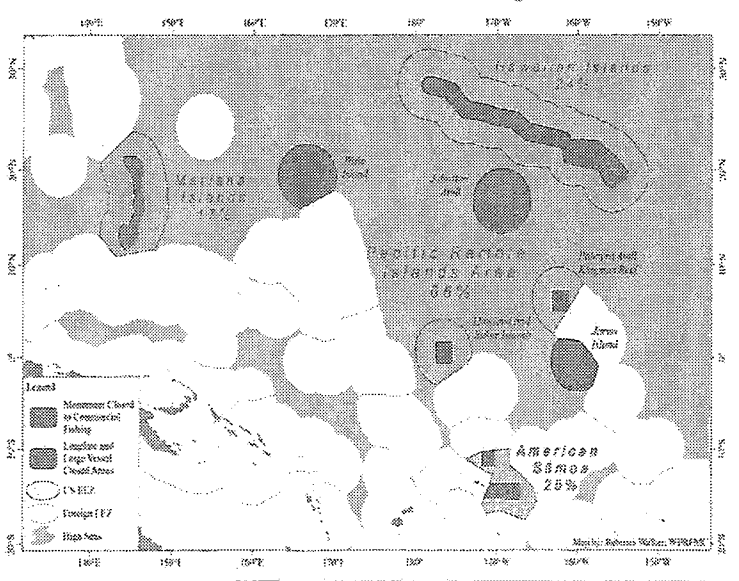
The most request to expand the PMNM calls upon President Obama to use the Antiquities Act to again create the largest MPA in the world. The Antiquities Act, however, requires no public hearings and no environmental analysis to justify why such a closure would be beneficial to marine resources and the people of Hawaii. On the other hand, the expansion would come at a huge cost to Hawaii residents. Up to 85 percent of the US EEZ around Hawaii (EEZ) could be restricted to fishing. These are the same waters that produce your locally-caught ahi for poke and sashimi. Closing the NWHI will not improve tuna stocks available to Hawaii's small scale fishermen. Already Hawaii commercial and non-commercial fishermen catch more yellowfin tuna (ahi) than the Hawaii longline fishery and the catch per unit of yellowfin in the Hawaii troll fisheries has been increasing over the last decade. Most of the concerns raised in the letter to the President are already addressed through existing federal statutes and regulations. The proposed benefits of the expansion area are incorrect, and Hawaii fisheries pose no threats to the cultural and marine resources identified by the monument expansion proponents. The existing 100-mile wide, 1200-mile long PMNM already protects the NWHI coral ecosystem, monk seals, seabirds, sea turtles, marine mammals and other marine resources (e.g. crustaceans, precious corals, etc.). Over 96 percent of the water from 50 nm to 200 nm is deeper than 4,000 meters (over 12,000 ft). Within this vast area of the abyssal plain are small pockets of deep-sea corals and sponge communities. Recent exploratory research of these deep sea areas have shown these areas are in pristine condition and not subject to any human activity, i.e. there are no threats to these deep sea resources. The Hawaii longline fishery has been prohibited from fishing within 50 nm from land in the NWHI since 1991. It is important to recognize that the deepest part of the longline fishes at 400 m, thus posing no threats to these deep sea communities. Bottom trawling, deep-sea tangle nets and other destructive fishing gear have been prohibited in the NWHI since 1986.

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Hawaiian Islands: Existing and Proposed Large Marine Managed Areas



US EEZ Closed to US Commercial Fishing Vessels



# Big Environmental Groups Continue to Prey

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As mentioned, resources in the NWHI are currently protected through numerous US laws—Magnuson Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, PMNM proclamation, and other applicable regulations and statutes. The table on the following page shows some of the reasons proponents are requesting the expansion, while the other column indicates the reality.

As a result of this potential massive federal ocean grab that has been requested and the weak scientific arguments, numerous letters have been sent to President Obama opposing the expansion and in favor of allowing Hawaii fisheries to continue to operate from 50-200 nm in the US waters around the NWHI. Letters have come from the following:

- Speaker of the House of Representatives Joseph Souki and House Representatives: Henry Aquino, Deila Belatti, Isaac Choy, Richard Creagan, Ty Cullen, Lynn DeCoite, Cindy Evans, Beth Fukumoto Chang, Sharron Harr, Linda Ichiyama, Ken Ito, Derek Kawakami, Bertrand Kobayashi, Sam Kong, Bob McDermott, Angus McKelvey, John Mizuno, Dee Morikawa, Mark Nakashima, Marcus Oshiro, Feki Pouha, Calvin Say, Gregg Takayama, James Tokioka, Cliff Tsuji, Gene Ward, Ryan Yamane and Kyle Yamashita.
- Senate President Ronald D. Kouchi
- Bernard Carvalho, Mayor, Kauai County
- Edwin Ebisui Jr., Chairman and Kitty Simonds, Executive Director, Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
- Governor Ralph DLG Torres, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Neil Kanemoto, President, Pacific Islands Fisheries Group
- Phil Fernandez, President, Hawaii Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition
- Basil Oshiro, President, Maui Fishermen's Cooperative
- Sean Martin, President, Hawaii Longline Association
- John Kaneko, Manager, Hawaii Seafood Council
- Dean Okimoto, Owner, Nalo Farms
- MGrew Rice, Captain, Charter Boat Operators

On May 5, 2016, prominent members from Hawaii's fishing industry and seafood businesses provided testimony to representatives from the White House's Council on Environmental Quality, Department of the Interior, Department of Commerce and Department of Defense at the NOAA Offices on Pier 38. Testimony provided varied perspectives on why the monument should not be expanded.

Alan Wong, Alan Wong Restaurants - "We're an island state. We're surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. We love to eat fish. We love to eat raw fish. We love to eat poke." "Eating fish, eating raw fish came with the first Hawaiians. It is genuine to Hawaii, and it is a tradition, and that's what we do. Fish has become such an important part of all of our menus in Hawaii so that our guests can taste Hawaii."

Roy Yamaguchi, Roy's Restaurants - "From what I hear, even when I was in Australia, that Hawaii has one of the great fisheries in the world, and thanks to all of the people that run it." "We don't want this process to drive the people in our state to seek imports and to bring the money somewhere else and not showcase what Hawaii has to offer to the rest of the world."

Dean Okimoto, Nalo Farms - "I believe that this will have a significant socioeconomic impact on Hawaii. It will affect the restaurants. It will even affect us because we have a movement right now in Hawaii that - and it's very strong, where a lot of the restaurants, a lot of the people are starting to realize supporting local and buying local is really important, not only because the money stays here, but it also makes people realize what we have here, and appreciate it." "At what point does it become really stupid, especially when none of the science supports this, and I believe the guys that are managing this fishery already are very responsible."

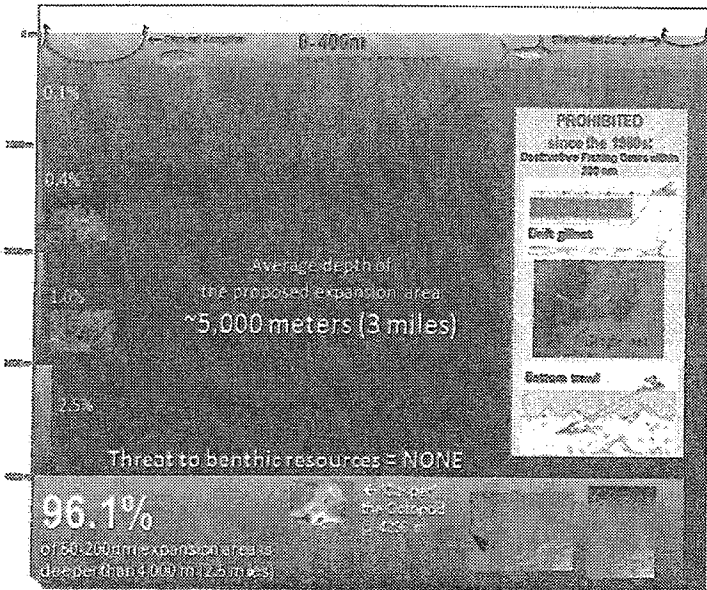
Others providing testimony and participating in the meeting included representatives from Hilo Fish, Tropic Fish and Vegetable, Garden Valley Isle Fish and Seafood, Fresh Island Fish, Tamashiro Market, United Fishing Agency, Nico's at Pier 38, Hawaii Production Associates, POP Fishing and Marine, Hawaii's Hunting Farming and Fishing Association, Pacific Fishing and Marine, Hawaii Seafood Council, Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, Pacific Islands Fisheries Group, Hawaii Longline Association, Hawaii Fishermen for Conservation and Tradition and other members of the local fishing community.

Based on the current situation, it is important to recognize that Hawaii's sustainable fisheries are under threat from individuals and environmental organizations with tunnel-visioned MPA agendas. MPAs are just one tool in the fisheries management tool box, but they are not a 'fix-all' solution. The effectiveness of MPAs on pelagic migratory tuna stocks has not been demonstrated and even smaller MPAs affecting coral reefs species or species with more site fidelity have not demonstrated increased catch rates in areas outside the MPAs. What MPAs typically do is displace fishing effort into areas outside the MPAs, increasing competition and lowering catch rates. MPAs have been demonstrated to increase abundance of low-ranging fish within the MPA, but spillover in terms of recruitment, abundance, and improved catch rates outside MPAs have not been shown.

Sustainable fisheries management is achieved with comprehensive data collection and the ability of the fishery management system to exert timely controls on fishing effort and catch through an adaptive regulatory framework, including addressing climate change. Marine Monuments and other no-take MPAs with fixed boundaries are not adaptive and more about establishing aquariums with little benefits to fisheries, fishermen, and local food security. In this perilous time, Hawaii fishermen need to be vigilant, vocal, and stand together to demand that actions such as the one to expand the PMNM need to be based on science, and not based on the agenda of environmental groups and individuals with no interests in fisheries or knowledge of the importance of fishing to Hawaii. Fishing is culture in Hawaii and our sustainably-managed fisheries are critically important to our economy and local food security.

To learn more, visit [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org)

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**Big Environmental Groups** ...continued

**2014 Hawaii Food Crops**  
(million \$, farmgate or dockside)

Food	\$ million	Kept in Hawaii
Commercial Wild Fish Landings	110.0	80-90%
Cattle	64.9	24%
Coffee	62.6	NA
Sugarcane	54.3	<5%
Macadamia Nuts	35.7	NA
Algae	33.0	0%
Bananas	11.8	100%
Papayas	11.3	50%
Milk	10.1	100%
Lettuce	7.6	100%
Taro	1.9	100%

Source: USDA Natl Ag. Stat Survey; Draft Pelagic Annual Report, WPRFMC

Reason for Expanding	Reality Response
"... provide added protection for the area's incredible natural and cultural heritage and will once again recognize Papahānaumokuākea as the largest protected area on Earth"	There are no population-level threats to marine resources, or threats to cultural resources, from Hawaii fisheries operating in waters 50-200 miles in the NWHI. Average depth in the area is about 5,000 m (16,000 ft or 3 miles) deep.
"... the area includes a diverse set of habitats that reach ocean depths of greater than 15,000 feet below sea level."	No "critical habitat" is designated via the Endangered Species Act in proposed monument expansion area. Hawaii's fisheries are determined by the federal government (NOAA) to not be jeopardizing endangered species and are also determined to be of negligible concern to any designated Essential Habitat or Habitat Area of Particular Concern in NWHI.
"... there are more than 7,000 marine species, and scientists estimate that more than a quarter of those are endemic."	A very small fraction of these 7,000 species inhabit the pelagic waters 50-200 miles from the NWHI. The majority of these species are found in the nearshore coral reef habitat in the NWHI (existing Monument).
"The area is one of the few remaining predator-dominated ecosystems in the world, with strong populations of sharks, Hawaiian grouper and other large predatory fish that have been heavily overfished elsewhere."	This refers to the coral reef ecosystem of the NWHI, which is already protected by the existing PMNM. Apex predators dominate this ecosystem during and after decades of fishing activities. There would no benefit to tunas and other pelagic migratory species that are part of large Pacific-wide populations that range well beyond the US EEZ.
"... it does not fully protect habitat and travel routes for several species including Hawaiian Monk Seals, green sea turtles, sharks, whales, Black-footed and Laysan Albatrosses as well as other species."	NOAA states in its 2014 Biological Opinion, that there is "very low likelihood of monk seals traveling more than 43 nm" offshore. NOAA determined that green sea turtle interactions with the Hawaii deep set longline fishery are "rare, unpredictable events" and that interactions with sharks of concern are "very low." Approximately 95% of the sharks caught in the Hawaii longline are released alive. All species of marine mammal, regardless of its population status, are monitored by NOAA. There are no population-level threats to these species from Hawaii's fisheries, or else NOAA would not authorize the fishing.
"... large, fully protected marine reserves and sanctuaries are more resilient to climate change and therefore have emerged as important to mitigating the impacts of our warming planet."	It is theorized that "fully-protected" marine reserves may impart some climate change resilience to ecosystems therein, but the scientific evidence is lacking. MPAs may improve climate change resiliency in areas with high human impact (pollution, overfishing), but in areas with low fisheries impact like the NWHI, there will not be climate change benefits from restricting fisheries.

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS**



The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council announces the following public meetings on fisheries management in offshore waters of Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the Pacific Remote Island Areas. For more information & complete agendas, go to [www.wpcouncil.org](http://www.wpcouncil.org) or contact the Council at [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov) or in Hawaii, ph. (808) 522-8226, fax (808) 522-8226; on Guam, ph. (671) 687-6812; in CNMI, ph. (670) 322-9834 or (670) 287-9482; and in American Samoa, ph. (684) 258-9588.

**123rd Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)**  
May 31-Jun 2 (T-Th) 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. 1164 Bishop St., #1400, Honolulu  
Major agenda item: Options to revise the risk determination & uncertainty characterization process to specify annual catch limits

**Guam Regional Ecosystem Advisory Committee (REAC)**  
June 2 (Th) 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Hilton Guam Resort & Spa  
Major agenda items: Pelagic & archipelagic annual fishery reports; Fishery Ecosystem Plan (FEP) implementation activities

**CNMI REAC**  
June 3 (F) 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Saipan Fiesta Resort, CNMI  
Major agenda item: Same as Guam REAC.

**Joint Guam and CNMI Marianas Advisory Panel**  
June 4 (Sa) 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Saipan Fiesta Resort, CNMI  
Major agenda items: Research needs; Council meeting major agenda items; community activities; FEP issues

**Fishery Data Collection & Research Committee**  
June 4 (Sa) 9 a.m.-noon Saipan Hyatt Regency, CNMI  
Major agenda items: Fisheries research; CNMI fishery database analytic; annual/SAFE report data; regional strategic plan

**Standing Committees**  
June 4 (Sa) 1 p.m.-5 p.m. Saipan Hyatt Regency, CNMI  
Major agenda items: Program Planning and Research; Executive and Budget

**166th Council Meeting**  
June 6-7 (M-T) 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Saipan Fiesta Resort, CNMI  
June 9-10 (Th-F) 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Hilton Guam Resort, Tumon Bay  
Major agenda items: Same as SSC plus modifying the Hawaii shallow-set observer coverage

**Fishers Forum "Data, data everywhere but not a megabyte to eat."**  
June 6 (M) 6 p.m.-9 p.m. Saipan Fiesta Resort, CNMI

**Fishers Forum "Mapping Fishery Resources"**  
June 9 (Th) 6 p.m.-9 p.m. Hilton Guam Resort, Tumon Bay

**Mapping Coral Reef Fisheries in Guam (fishermen session)**  
June 11 (Sa) 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Hilton Guam Resort, Tumon Bay

For more information and full agendas, go to [wpcouncil.org](http://wpcouncil.org) or ph. (808) 522-8226, fax (808) 522-8226 or email [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov); in Guam, ph. (671) 687-6812; in CNMI, ph. (670) 322-9834 or (670) 287-9482; and in American Samoa, ph. (684) 258-9588. **Written comments** for the 166th Council meeting received by June 1, 2016, will be distributed to Council members prior to the meeting. Send comments to Kitty M. Simonds, Executive Director, WPRFMC, 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813; fax to 808 522-8226; or email to [info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov](mailto:info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov). After June 1, the submitter must provide Council staff with at least 40 copies of the written comments at the meeting. Public comment opportunities are also available during the meeting as noted on the agenda. These public meetings are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Requests for sign language interpretation or other auxiliary aids should be requested at least five days prior to the meeting.