

ENVIRONMENT

‘That Ocean Belongs To Us,’ Former Governor Tells Feds

Several of Hawaii’s former top leaders join a rally opposing Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument expansion.

JULY 26, 2016 • By Nathan Eagle   

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Former Gov. George Ariyoshi said Tuesday that he doesn’t want “somebody from the outside” dictating how Hawaii residents can use the waters around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

A few dozen opponents of the proposed fourfold expansion of [Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument](#) stood behind him in the Capitol Rotunda, holding signs saying “Not so fast” and “Protect our local food source.”

“That ocean belongs to us,” Ariyoshi said.



Former Gov. George Ariyoshi addresses opponents of the marine monument expansion, Tuesday, at the Hawaii Capitol.

Former U.S. Sen. Dan Akaka followed suit, saying the public needs to know more about the proposal before President Barack Obama considers using his executive authority under the Antiquities Act to expand the monument.

“It’s unconscionable for us to enact a new policy of expanding Papahānaumokuākea without proper transparency,” Akaka said. “What does it do to the people of Hawaii?”

Supporters — a few of whom were at the rally to try to counter the opposition — want the president to expand the monument in September when Hawaii hosts the world’s largest conservation conference. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature’s World Conservation Congress is set to meet in Honolulu Sept. 1-10.

While no public hearings are required, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are planning to hold [two public meetings next week](#), one on Oahu and the other on Kauai.



Sen. Dan Akaka said he wants more transparency in the process of expanding the monument.

Opponents say that's not good enough. Hawaii Longline Association President Sean Martin said the feds should have a more robust public process to vet the proposal, one in which comments are tabulated and and submitted.

The current process allows in-person, written or oral testimony at the meetings and three other locations that day, or letters can be sent to the White House, according to federal officials.

The [proposal](#) calls for expanding the monument from 139,800 square miles, the area President George W. Bush established in 2006, to 582,578 square miles. It would expand the boundary around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands from its current 50-mile radius out to 200 miles.

While state waters extend three miles offshore, and federal authority extends for 200 miles.

Ariyoshi, Akaka and former Gov. Ben Cayetano sent the president a letter last week that says

“the proposed expansion will impact the State’s ability to continue its trust responsibility to native Hawaiians.”

“The native Hawaiian traditional fishing practice to bring fish and other resources back to their families and communities is prohibited in that area,” they wrote, explaining how federal permits are required to access the monument.



Office of Hawaiian Affairs CEO Kamana’opono Crabbe said he supports the proposal to elevate OHA to co-trustee of the monument if it’s expanded as proposed.

However, the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which supports the expansion as [outlined in June by U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz](#), said in a statement Tuesday that the proposal could actually increase access to the area for Hawaiians.

“In the ten years since the creation of the monument, no Native Hawaiian who has applied for a permit has ever been denied access,” OHA officials said in the statement.

“The waters that would be included in the expansion are already under the jurisdiction of the federal government, which has been the sole manager of the area since 1976,” the

federal government, which has been the sole manager of the area since 1976, the statement said. “Expanding the monument will bring the area under a co-management structure where OHA, if elevated to a co-trustee position, will be able to effectively advocate for Native Hawaiian rights and access.”

Schatz’s proposal calls for elevating OHA to a co-trustee of the monument and pushing the monument’s expansion boundary slightly farther west so it includes a weather buoy that fishermen use as a fish-aggregating device.

That helped secure the OHA Board of Trustees’ [support in May](#), save for one “no” vote from [Peter Apo](#) and one abstention from John Waihee.

“By becoming a co-trustee, we will have a greater voice and more influence on policy, protections and programmatic activities,” said Kamana’opono Crabbe, CEO of OHA.



Cory Lum/Civil Beat

Narissa Spies, an [Expand Papahanaumokuakea](#) supporter, holds a sign outside a rally opposing the marine monument’s expansion.

“We will be able to create prospects for cultural research that has scientific implications and for Native Hawaiian students to maintain the spiritual, intellectual and genealogical bond with islands traversed by their forefathers,” Crabbe said. “Papahanaumokukea will be the largest marine sanctuary in the world and make us a global leader to show conservation and

progress can work hand-in-hand to create a more sustainable future for everyone.”

Schatz’ proposal has enraged the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, whose members [sent him a letter](#) last week criticizing him for not consulting with them before announcing it.

The initial proposal to expand the monument came in February from a [group of seven Hawaiians](#), including Crabbe and Nainoa Thompson, navigator and president of the Polynesian Voyaging Society. It didn’t set firm boundaries, but got the ball rolling for Schatz’s more specific proposal.

There were a few supporters of the expansion at the rally against the proposal. They stood quietly in the back, holding their own signs.

Narrissa Spies, a graduate student who works at Kewalo Marine Laboratory, said she saw the ad for the rally on Facebook and wanted to come down to the Capitol to show there are other voices.

“They don’t represent all of the people,” Spies said. “I actually agree with a lot of their signs though; the ocean is for all of us. It’s not just for commercial fishing.”



People opposed to the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea hold signs during the morning rally at the Capitol.

Hawaii longliners have been vocal opponents of the monument expansion, saying it would be a drag on the economy and [hurt the fishing industry](#).

The longliners primarily target bigeye tuna for local sashimi markets. They catch, on average, about 8 percent of their annual haul of bigeye in the area proposed for expanded protections.

It is a quota-based system, however, and the fishermen have said they can go elsewhere to make up the difference. Both sides have acknowledged this could increase the costs, but it's unclear how much this might amount to.

The longliners [hit their 3,554-ton limit](#) for 2016 at record pace, prompting the closure of the Western and Central Pacific fishery last Friday. Discussions are underway to buy unused quotas from Pacific island territories, as they've done in years past, so they can resume fishing.

In the meantime, some of the longline fishermen are heading to the Eastern Pacific. [NOAA estimates](#) there's still 300 tons of bigeye to be caught there.



Lobbyist Bob Toyofuku made his rounds during the rally at the Capitol against the marine monument's expansion.

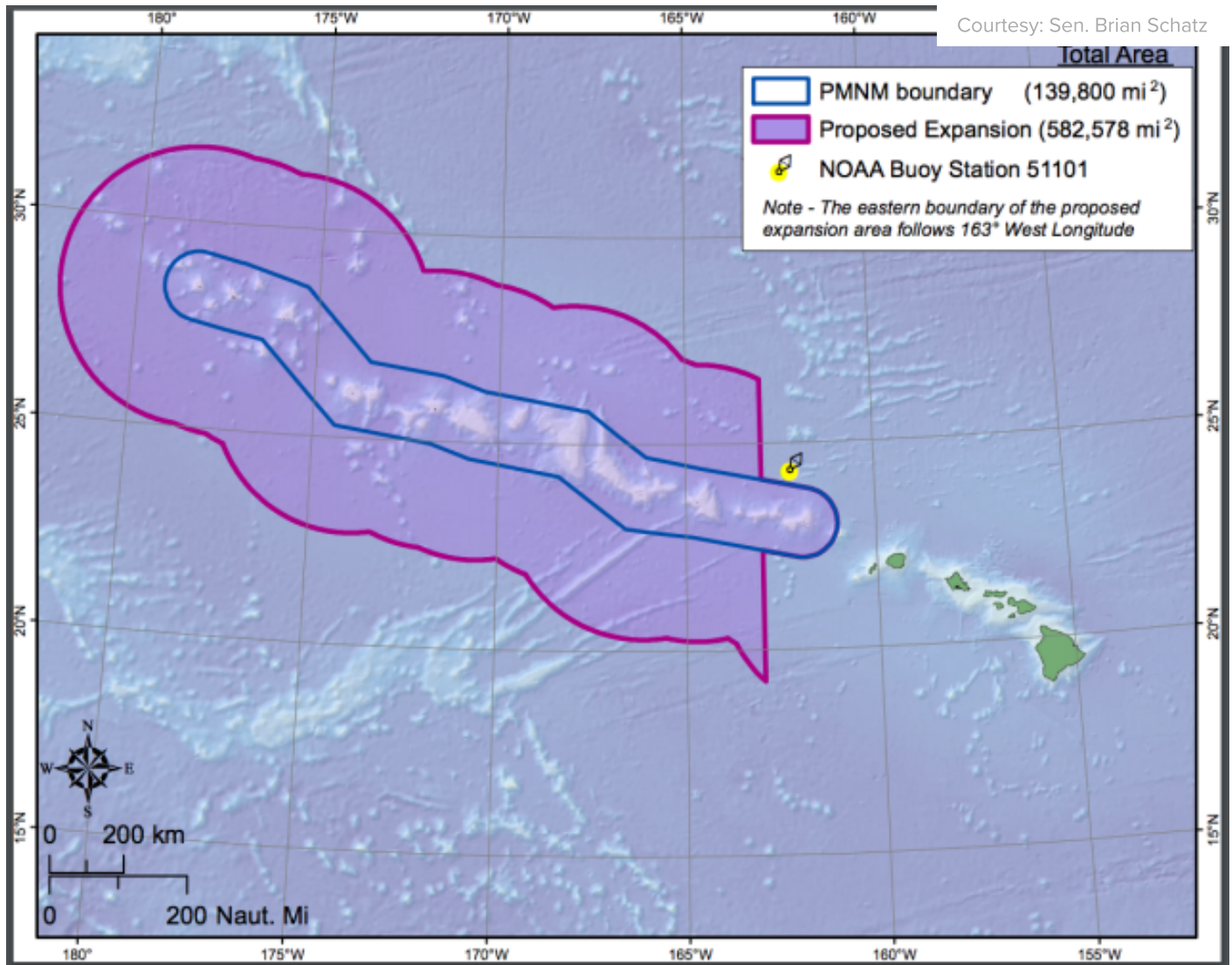
Hawaii longliners hauled in 27 million pounds of fish in 2013, with a dockside value of \$85.4 million. The fish include bigeye and yellowfin tuna, known as ahi in Hawaii, along with swordfish, mahimahi, opah and ono.

Akaka had raised concerns about the impacts to the fishing industry when the monument was initially established. He eventually went along with it, though, and joined Bush with other Hawaii politicians for the official signing of the proclamation creating the monument.

This time around, Akaka said he's still concerned about the effect the proposal will have on the fishing industry but also the lack of information about why the expansion is necessary.

"I still don't have answers that satisfy me," he said in an interview. "Any expansion within the vicinity of Hawaii should be transparent to the people."

Courtesy: Sen. Brian Schatz



This map shows the proposed expansion area around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Schatz said in his letter to the president that expanding Papahānaumokuākea “will strengthen an ecosystem that sustains tuna, swordfish, sharks, seabirds, sea turtles, and Hawaiian monk seals,” thereby supporting more productive fisheries outside the monument and creating a “vigorous carbon sink to combat climate change.”

He also said the proposal will preserve undiscovered biodiversity and undocumented ecosystems, such as sea mounts, while maintaining a reservoir of genetic diversity that will allow marine species to adapt to environmental change. He noted the area also contains “significant bio-cultural resources and archaeological sites,” and important traditional navigational waters for Hawaiians.

Several state lawmakers were at the rally, including Reps. Dee Morikawa, Bert Kobayashi, Lynn DeCoite, Ryan Yamane, Kyle Yamashita, Della Au Belatti and Calvin Say.

Thirty of the 51 House members [sent Obama a letter](#) in May opposing the proposed expansion. Senate President Ron Kouchi sent a nearly identical letter just days earlier.

One of the state's biggest lobbyists, Bob Toyofuku, also attended the rally. He was making his rounds as employees of [iQ360](#), a public-relations firm hired by the [Fishing Means Food](#) coalition, worked to arrange the people holding protest signs.

Read the letter to Obama from Akaka, Ariyoshi and Cayetano below.

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

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Black Coffee

22 hours ago

Good job on this story.

It's pretty sad and cynical for the fishing industry and its allies to continue to paint this dispute as one of pushy outsiders and the federal government imposing their will on Hawaiians and other locals, especially since local Hawaiians initiated the expansion, which is supported by OHA and our senior senator.

Will we ever grow out of this kind of deliberately divisive emotional bullsh*t?