

United States Senate

March 23, 2016

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

Dear Mr. President:

Local and national media have reported on a request made to you by several prominent Native Hawaiians to expand the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM). As you know, President Bush designated PMNM in 2009, and it is a place of significant ecological, economic, and cultural value.

I believe expansion of this area may further protect important objects of historic and scientific interest. It raises concerns, however, about the boundaries, governance, and resources for any expansion. Provided we work together to resolve these issues, I am prepared to join my constituents and formally request that you utilize your authorities under the Antiquities Act to expand the PMNM.

Boundaries. Hawai'i's longline fleet has a history of fishing in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The responsible and sustainable practices of our longline fleet have resulted in Honolulu becoming one of the nation's ten most productive fishing ports. Hawai'i also has a long tradition of recreational and subsistence uses of the ocean including fishing, diving, canoe paddling, and sailing. I hope that you will consider these uses in determining the appropriate boundaries for any expansion of the PMNM.

Governance. The PMNM holds special significance for Native Hawaiians, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) has made a request for an enhanced role in governance of the monument. OHA made this request independent of any expansion proposal, and it rests on a foundation of long historic and cultural use of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands by Native Hawaiians. I support OHA's request for an enhanced role in governance, and I believe that an expansion declaration presents an ideal opportunity to address this issue.

Resources. Expanding the PMNM will create vast opportunities to better understand this unique ecosystem. This can only occur, however, if sufficient funding exists for research, conservation,

and management in an expanded PMNM. The current fiscal climate, however, limits the availability of federal funding. I believe, however, that environmental groups, philanthropic organizations and individuals would consider significant financial commitments to support the expansion of the PMNM, and I recommend that you consider exploring these options as part of your deliberative process.

Before proceeding with any potential expansion of the PMNM, I believe it is critical that your Administration commence direct and meaningful engagement with Hawaii stakeholders who have an interest in this special place and its surrounding waters. I believe that a state visit by members of your team, as well as appropriate agency representatives, will go a long way towards a thorough and complete assessment of any PMNM expansion proposal.

My office stands ready to assist you and your staff toward productive meetings on these topics and developing an expansion proposal. I look forward to working together on this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

cc: Christy Goldfuss, Managing Director, Council on Environmental Quality
Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior
Penny Pritzker, Secretary of Commerce
Dan Ashe, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service
Dr. Kathy Sullivan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere