

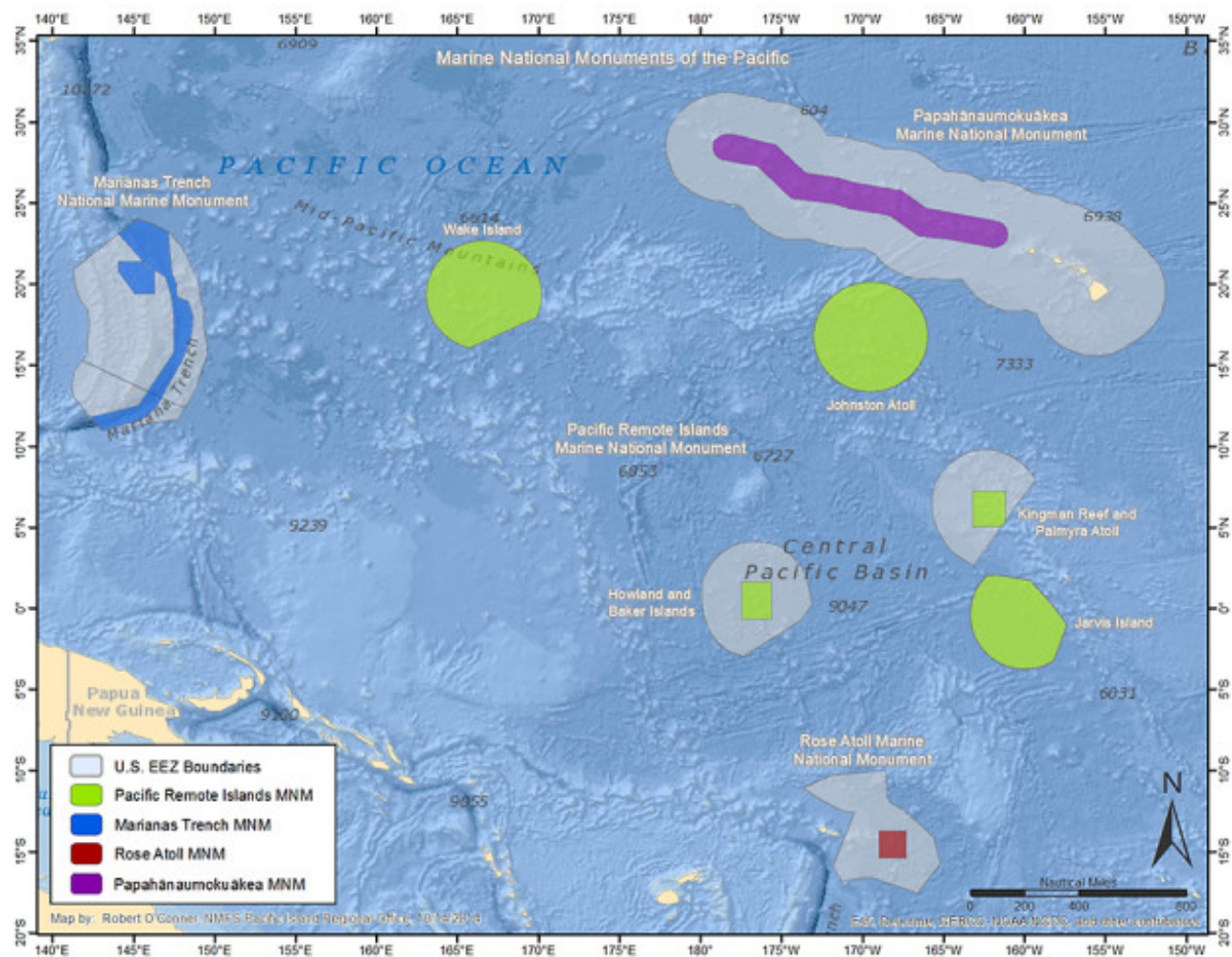
Study: Marine Monuments Aren't Hurting Hawaii's Tuna Fishermen

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Nathan Eagle

President Barack Obama's massive expansions of two marine national monuments did not cause any of the alleged financial harm that Hawaii's longline tuna fishermen had threatened would happen, according to a first-of-its-kind study released Thursday.

The Honolulu-based fleet actually caught more fish and made more money after the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea in 2016 and Pacific Remote Islands in 2014. Its revenue from 2014 to 2017 was 13.7% higher than from 2010 to 2013, the study found.



This NOAA map shows the U.S. exclusive economic zone boundaries and four marine national monuments. This is also the swath of ocean over which Wespac has jurisdiction.

Courtesy: NOAA Fisheries

The study, "Impact of two of the world's largest protected areas on longline fishery catch rates" was led by John Lynham, a University of Hawaii economics professor. The paper was published in Nature Communications.

“Our conclusion from this is clear: Papahānaumokuākea and the Pacific Remote Islands marine national monuments have not hurt the fishing industry overall,” Lynham said in a release. “This is not too surprising when you consider that, in 2015, when Papahānaumokuākea was open to fishing, 97 percent of fishing was taking place outside the monument in waters that are still open to fishing today.”

Leading up to Obama’s decision to expand Papahānaumokuākea, Hawaii’s commercial tuna boat operators and members of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, the federal agency that oversees the fishing industry, argued that the monument’s fourfold expansion would cause direct losses up to \$10 million annually and could result in a \$30 million hit to the economy.

“The effect of (a marine protected area) on a fishery is often difficult to assess because of the many factors that affect catch such as ocean conditions, prices and changing regulations,” Lynham said. “A strength of this study is that by comparing the longline tuna fishery to two other fisheries unaffected by the monument designation, we’ve controlled for factors that could be biasing the results.”

President George W. Bush designated the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument in 2006 and Papahānaumokuākea in 2009. The expanded monuments encompass over 1 million square miles, protecting coral reefs, endangered marine life, deep-sea creatures and more.