

**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

June 26, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our dismay and respectfully offer our advice regarding your June 17th announcement of the proposed expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (MNM). Fishing is the only existing activity that will be impacted by such an expansion as currently proposed. We are surprised that your staff did not consult with the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council as part of your decision making process. The Council has been developing management measures and monitoring the fisheries operating in these waters for nearly four decades, and strongly advises against banning US fishermen from fishing in the waters surrounding the US Pacific Remote Islands.

As noted in the findings of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, "Pacific Insular Areas contain unique historical, cultural, legal, political, and geographical circumstances which make fisheries resources important in sustaining their economic growth." The Pacific Remote Islands are important tuna fishing grounds for US pelagic longline vessels operating out of Hawaii and US purse seine vessels operating from American Samoa. Events such as El Niño/La Niña lead to shifts in tuna biomass by many thousands of miles, and, at these times, the US exclusive economic zone (EEZ) around the Pacific Remote Islands becomes extremely important to our fishermen.

Neither fishery poses a threat to the pristine coral reef and reef associated habitats around the US Pacific Remote Islands, and fishing is already banned in waters from 0 to 50 nautical miles from shore of these islands through the existing monument boundaries. These fisheries also have no significant impact to any other marine resource in the waters contained within the proposed monument expansion.

We, therefore, strongly advise that it is in the best interests of the US Pacific Islands region and the nation, which benefits from the fresh and canned tuna from our fisheries, that US commercial fishing continue to be allowed in perpetuity in the US EEZ around the US Pacific Remote Islands from 50 to 200 nautical miles from shore should any proposal to expand the Pacific Remote Islands MNM move forward. Our position statement is enclosed.



Arnold Palacios
Chair

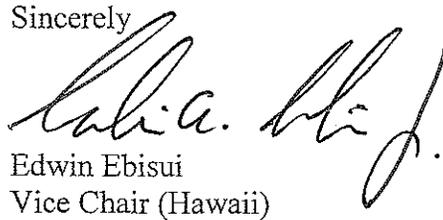


William Sword
Vice Chair (American Samoa)



Richard Seman
Vice Chair (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands)

Sincerely



Edwin Ebisui
Vice Chair (Hawaii)



Michael Duenas
Vice Chair (Guam)

Enclosure: "Obama Administration's Proposed Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument Expansion Betrays US Fishermen, Places Unfair Burden on US Pacific Islands"

Cc: Mr. Michael Boots, Acting Director, Council on Environmental Quality
Congressional Delegation of US Pacific Islands



June 30, 2014

Obama Administration's Proposed Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument Expansion Betrays US Fishermen, Places Unfair Burden on US Pacific Islands

On June 17, 2014, at the Our Oceans Conference held at the State Department in Washington, DC, President Obama announced his intent to use Presidential authority to “preserve and protect the ocean.”ⁱ The White House’s press release clarifies that the Administration will immediately consider expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.ⁱⁱ Further details on what the public and US fishermen in the Pacific Islands might expect are in the May 20, 2014, report to the United States government “Expansion of the U.S. Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument: The largest ocean legacy on Earth,” accessible on the Marine Conservation Institute website.ⁱⁱⁱ The report recommends that the current monument encompassing 50 nautical miles (nm) around the seven US Pacific Remote Islands be expanded to the full extent of the US 200-nm exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

President Obama’s continued aspiration for a strong legacy concerning environmental issues is commendable, but his plan for the US Pacific Islands unfairly penalizes the US fishermen and seafood consumers who depend on this resource. US fishermen, including those in the Pacific, already abide by the strictest fishing regulations in the world, and this plan further inhibits their economic survival. For example, the proposal will result in a tenfold increase in US waters from which US fishermen are banned and disproportionately burdens fishermen in the US Pacific Islands.

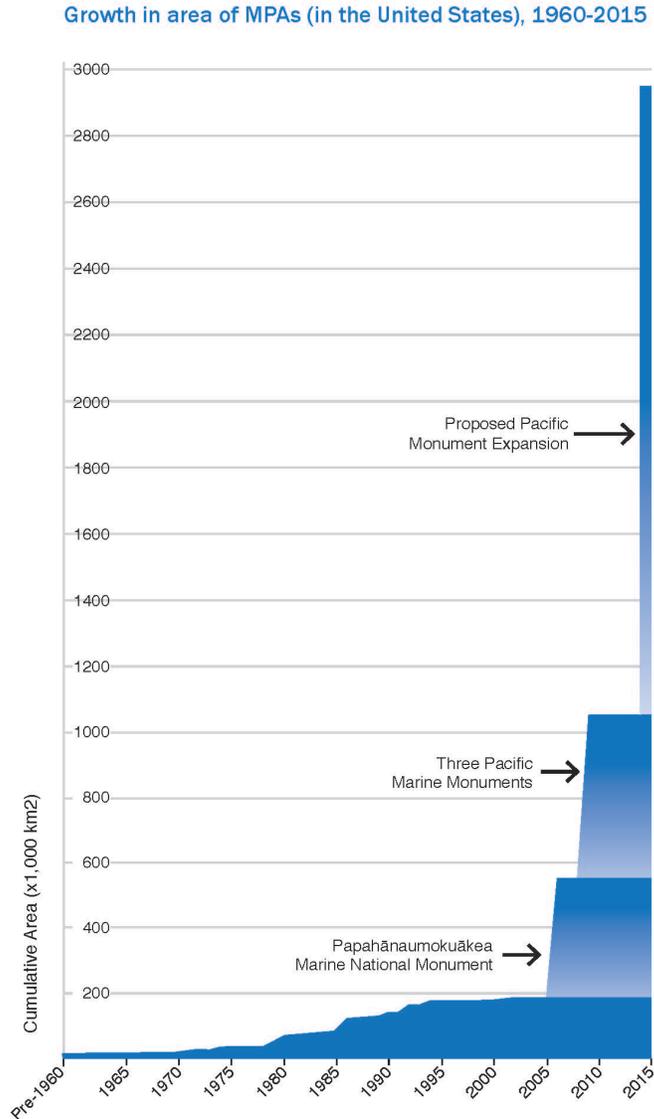
To ensure their continued survival and because these changes will do little for conservation, the US government should allow US fishermen continued access to the US EEZ around the existing 0-50 nm Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.

HISTORY

The Obama Administration’s proposed monument expansion joins a lengthy list of historical restrictions on US Pacific Island fishermen. In 2006, President George W. Bush used the Antiquities Act, a power created in 1906 for the President to declare areas of US land to be national monuments, to establish the first-ever marine national monument. It spans 140,000 square miles of waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands.^{iv} Its establishment shut down federally managed US fisheries that supplied Hawaii with nearly 50 percent of its bottomfish by restricting US fishermen from their traditional fishing grounds in the US EEZ around the remote Hawaiian Islands. These restrictions led to increased foreign fish imports into Hawaii, the loss of livelihood for US fishermen, and the displacement of other US fishermen. In 2009, President Bush used the same Act to establish three more marine monuments where commercial fishing is banned.^v

Creation of the existing monuments in the US Pacific Islands also included many broken promises. For example, when the monument in the Hawaiian Islands was developed, native Hawaiians

were told they could continue traditional fishing there. However, once the monument was established, fishermen were prohibited from bringing their catch home to their families and community, as was customary. When the Marianas Trench Marine Monument was created, promises such as millions of dollars in revenue, a visitors' center and co-management promised by the Pew Environment Group and James Connaughton from the White House's Council on Environmental Quality were left unfilled.

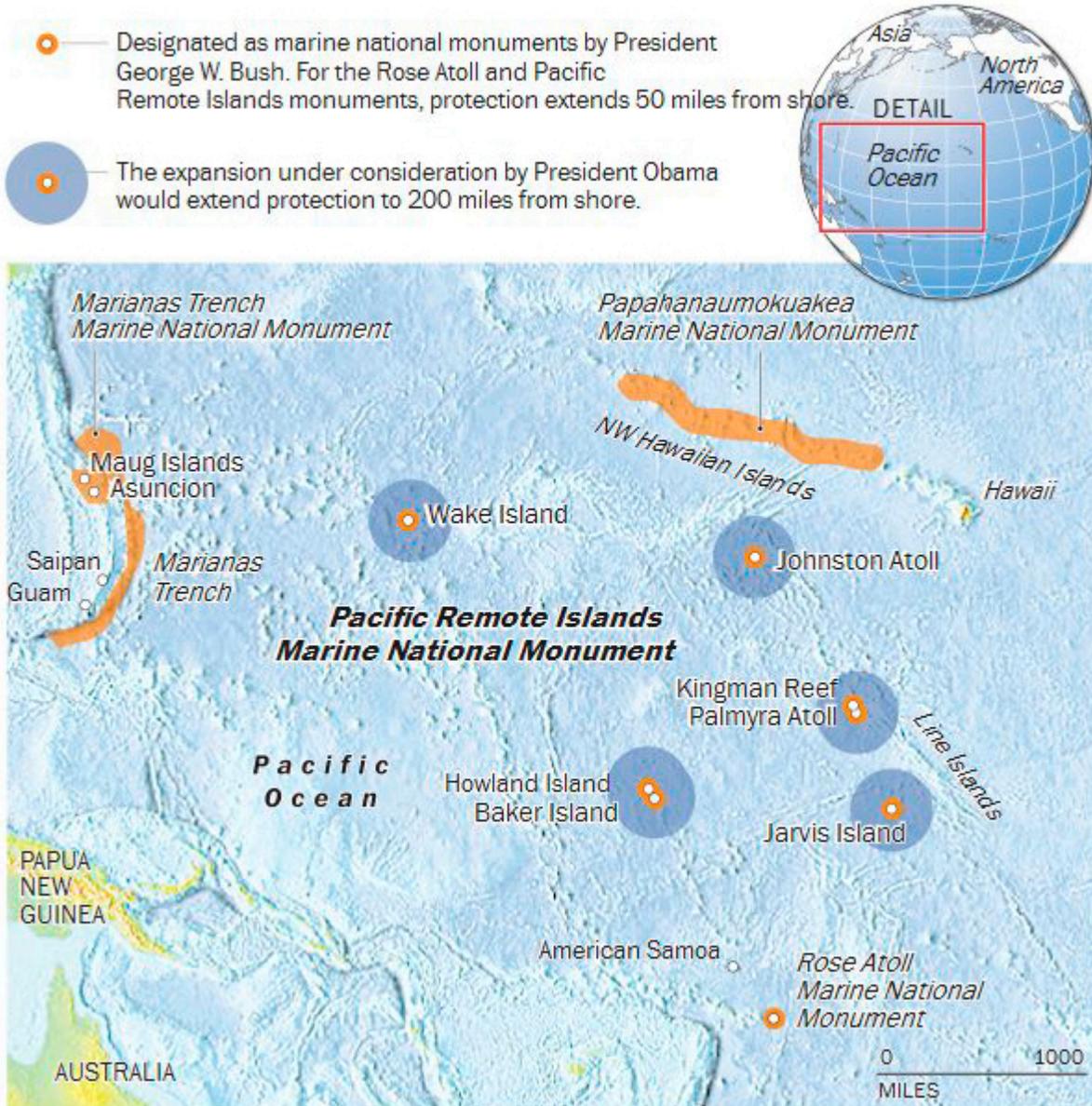


[Source: “Conserving our Oceans One Place at a Time.” marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov]

CURRENT SITUATION

The US commercial fishing industry operating in the US EEZ around the US Pacific Islands is already strictly regulated by federal and international measures ranging from restrictions on gear types to allowable locations. Only two fish stocks are overfished. The first is the ground seamount stock at Hancock Seamount, which was depleted by foreign fishing prior to establishment of the US EEZ and which is under a moratorium. The second overfished stock was announced just this year, the West Central North Pacific striped marlin, which is highly migratory and subject to international fishery management. Likewise, there is only one stock experiencing overfishing in waters around the US Pacific Islands, the bigeye tuna, which is also highly migratory and subject to international management measures. The “overfished” designation relates to the status of the stock. Overfishing indicates that a fishery under its existing catch and effort is unsustainable over the long-term, and could lead to an overfished stock. Given the highly migratory nature of the stocks and international nature of these fisheries and the management of them, further reductions on US fishing opportunities in US waters are unnecessary and will only cause harm to our nation.

The existing Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument encompasses 77,020 square miles (199,500 km²) of US waters around Kingman Reef, Palmyra Atoll, Howland Island, Baker Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll and Wake Island. These are the waters located 0-50 nautical miles (nm) from shore. At Howland Island, Baker Island, Jarvis Island, Palmyra Atoll, and Kingman Reef the terrestrial areas, reefs and waters out to 12 nautical miles (22 km; 14 mi) (radius) are further protected as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Coral reefs, near-shore habitats and deep-water precious corals are well protected through these designations. Commercial fishing is banned, and recreational fishing is allowed only at Palmyra, operated by the National Wildlife Refuge in partnership with The Nature Conservancy.



[Source: DATA: Interior Department. GRAPHIC: Patterson Clark. *The Washington Post*. Published June 17, 2014.]

Commercial fishing by US fishermen is the only existing activity that would be affected by the monument expansion. Foreign fishing vessels do not operate in the US EEZ around the Pacific Remote Islands nor for that matter in US waters around any other Pacific Island, including American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CMNI), Guam and Hawaii. Foreign fishing in these waters would require a Pacific Insular Areas Fishing Agreement (PIAFA). Since the creation of the US EEZ in 1976, no such agreement has been made.

US fishermen in the Pacific Islands have to observe no-take areas in the monuments and additional fishing areas closed due to designated National Marine Sanctuary expansions, such as Aunu`u in American Samoa. They also have to contend with myriad military zones including Pearl

Harbor and Barking Sands in Hawaii, the northern two-thirds of the island of Guam plus its southern banks, and the waters around the islands of Tinian and Farallon de Medinilla, and around pre-positioning vessel sites off Saipan in the CNMI. Pagan is being proposed as another militarized closed area. These closed areas, along with state and territorial marine protected areas and reserves, as well as fishing areas inaccessible due to currents and inclement weather (islands typically have calm waters on one side and rough waters on the other) have resulted in fishermen being forced into more dangerous waters and increased injuries and drownings of American fishermen. By comparison, federally restricted fishing zones developed through a public process take into account safety-at-sea and other national standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA).

With the four marine monuments in place, the US Pacific Islands account for 90 percent of the nation's marine protected areas in size of area protected and 95 percent of the nation's marine protected areas that do not allow commercial fishing. If the Pacific Remote Islands Monument were to be expanded to the 200-mile EEZ, 67 percent of the US EEZ in the Pacific Islands would be closed to US commercial fishermen.

IMPACT OF EXPANSION

Given these factors, the expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument will negatively impact the US fishing economy by overstepping currently managed sustainable management regimes, reducing US fisheries competitiveness, and yielding few, if any, ecological benefits from the restrictions.

Successful US Fishing Regulations Disregarded

US commercial fisheries operating in US waters around the Pacific Islands are already well regulated and monitored to ensure conservation and management of fish stocks, habitat and the ecosystem. Fishermen operating in the waters around the Pacific Remote Islands include US longline vessels targeting bigeye and yellowfin tuna for the US fresh fish markets (with fish kept on ice and not put in freezers) and US purse seine vessels targeting skipjack for tuna canneries, such as those that make up the primary economy of American Samoa. These fishing operations are based in Hawaii, American Samoa and California and are managed federally through the MSA, among other federal regulations.

They also abide by the international conservation and management measures of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, both of which the United States is a treaty member. These US vessels adhere to numerous regulations including, but not limited to, annual catch quotas, vessel monitoring systems, observer coverage (i.e., observers placed onboard to monitor catches and compliance with regulations, including potential protected species interactions), protected species workshops, mandatory protected species release gear, restricted vessel size of 101 feet for longline vessels, and restricted fleet size (Hawaii longline fleet capped at 164 with actual size at about 140 vessels).

In the White House's press release, the President proclaimed "the health of our ocean is under threat on multiple fronts, from overfishing to carbon pollution." Expanding the Monument and restricting US fishermen from US waters will not mitigate these threats. US fisheries already operate under annual catch and effort limits and numerous other federal and international regulations.

John Podesta, described by the *Washington Post* as “the man behind President Obama’s new environmental push” told conferees at the Capitol Hill Ocean Week in Washington, DC on June 10, “Because of [the] MSA [Magnuson-Stevens Act] reforms...we have largely ended overfishing in federally managed waters and we’re rebuilding fish stocks at unprecedented rates in much of our country...I want to emphasize what a tremendous accomplishment that is ...”

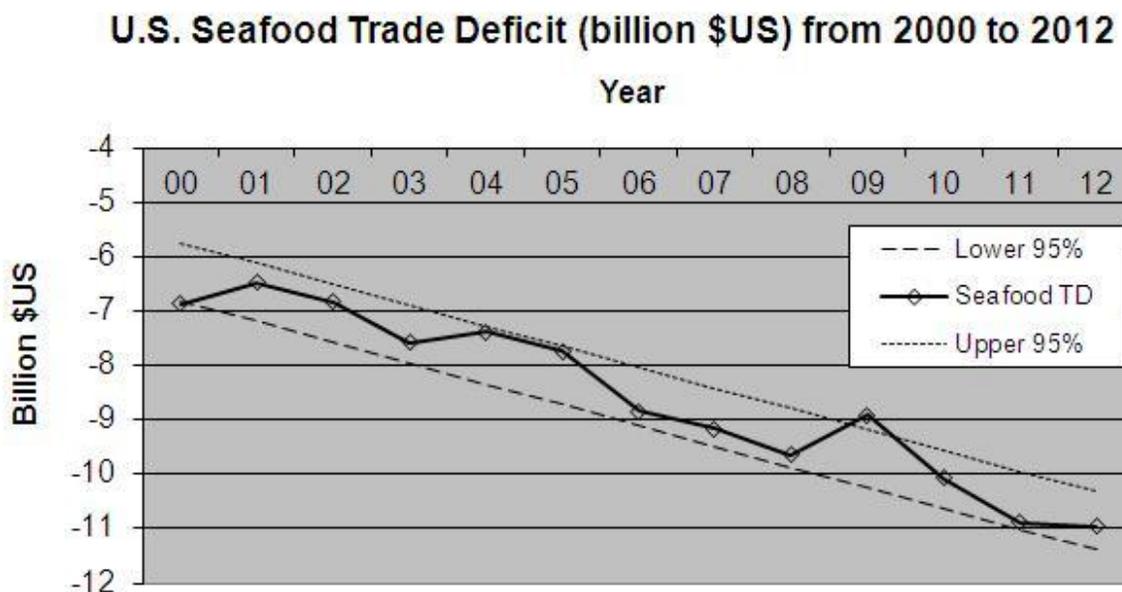
US vessels are highly monitored, strictly regulated and enforced by the Regional Fishery Management Councils, National Marine Fisheries Service and US Coast Guard (USCG).

The waters around the Pacific Remote Islands Marine Monument are equally important to US fishermen and to the nation. As noted in the publication of the USCG’s *Protecting America’s Fisheries*, “With its great distance from the mainland, it is easy to ignore issues that are specific to the region.” Many Americans are unaware that Honolulu consistently ranks within the top ten commercial fishing ports in the US by value landed^{vi}.

The President also acknowledged that US fisheries management is ending overfishing and rebuilding fish stocks. Limiting US fishermen from their nation’s waters and disregarding the spectacular success of many management measures already being implemented does not best serve US fishermen.

US Fisheries Lose Foreign Competitive Advantage

In its press release, the White House acknowledges that “Americans all over the country depend on the ocean for food, jobs and recreation,” but speaks little of the foreign trade dimensions of this issue. About 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the United States is imported from foreign countries and results in a nearly \$11 billion seafood trade deficit. Banning US fishermen from nearly a million square miles of US waters will only exacerbate this situation, keeping Americans from domestically produced seafood and jobs.



The US seafood trade deficit in 2012 was valued at \$10.96 billion (trade data by the US Census Bureau).
 [Source: Michigan Aquaculture Association; <http://michiganaquaculture.org/>]

The US purse-seine fleet is currently facing record license fees under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty, which is negotiated by the US Department of State. This means that the US Pacific Remote Islands offer needed, accessible fishing areas, especially for US seiners that operate out of American Samoa and predominately in the central Pacific. American Samoa's limited economy is highly dependent on the tuna processing industry, and any negative impacts to the US tuna vessels that operate out of American Samoa will likewise have a negative impact on the American Samoa economy.

The US EEZ around Palmyra outside of 50 nm is fished by the Hawaiian longline fleet. It is an important area for Hawaiian fishing vessels targeting bigeye tuna without competition from foreign fleets. As much as 12 percent of the annual Hawaiian longline catch has been produced out of the EEZ around Palmyra, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service. There is significant fishing effort by the Hawaiian longline fleet around Johnston as well. Bigeye tuna stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean are predicted to shift eastward as a result of climate change impacts^{vii}. US longline fishermen will be unable to access bigeye stocks in the equatorial US Pacific Remote Islands waters if these are completely closed to fishing. It imposes a disadvantage relative to other Pacific Island nations that will keep their EEZs open to fishing.

Because US fishing vessels are equipped with vessel monitoring systems (VMSs) and closely monitored by the National Marine Fisheries Service and United States Coast Guard, a monument expansion would prohibit their entry into US waters while foreign vessels, which are not required to have VMS on the high seas, could illegally operate in our waters. Without the presence of US fishing vessels to act as sentinels, illegal foreign fishing is likely to increase^{viii}. Such a scenario is a betrayal to US fishermen in the US Pacific Islands.

Hawaiian longline fishermen will not be allowed to fish the US EEZ around the Pacific Remote Islands. However, foreign and domestic purse seine vessels can fish these waters indirectly by deploying fish aggregation devices (FADS), which are not required to be marked. Charles Daxboeck, Chair of the Scientific and Statistical Committee that advises the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council (WPRFMC), notes that such foreign fishermen can deploy FADS on the high seas adjacent to the PRIA EEZs, with the intention that these FADS will drift through the PRIA EEZs accumulating fish as they go, to be fished in the high seas on the other side.

Limited Ecological Benefit

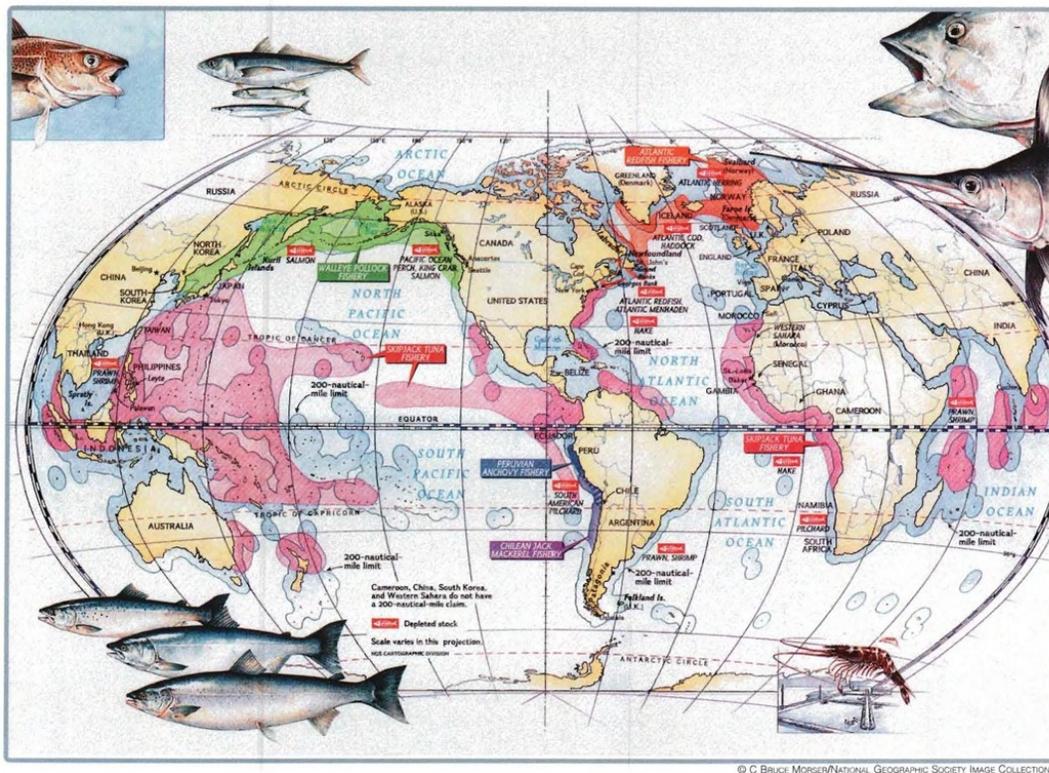
For highly migratory species, like tuna, overfishing is better addressed through catch limits and capacity limits. Closing off fishing areas does not work, as it might with fish that show high-site fidelity. As demonstrated by the closures of two high seas pockets, established in 2008 under a WCPFC conservation and management measure, restricted areas have little impact. The closures resulted in no change to tuna stock status and no reduction in fishing mortality because fishing effort and catches of the same stocks shifted into other areas of high seas and EEZs in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

Other species would experience limited benefits from the proposed monument expansion as well. Seabirds that nest on the Pacific Remote Islands are migratory and forage well beyond the waters of the US EEZ. There is no scientific evidence indicating that the US purse seine and longline fishing vessels operating in the offshore waters surrounding the existing 0 to 50 nm Pacific Remote Islands

Marine Monument are impacting seabird populations, either through direct or indirect interaction, such as reducing the availability of seabird forage^{IX}.

Likewise, expanding the Monument will provide no meaningful conservation benefit to sharks. There are no directed shark fisheries occurring in the waters surrounding the US Pacific Remote Islands or other US Pacific Islands. Purse seine fishing on FADS sometimes incidentally encounter sharks. However, existing WCPFC and domestic measures prohibit retention of these species. The Hawaiian longline fleet incidentally catches sharks, predominantly blue sharks. However, more than 95 percent of these sharks are released alive and catch is predominantly in waters far north of the Pacific Remote Islands. Oceanic sharks are highly migratory and prohibiting fishing within the US EEZ around the Pacific Remote Islands will not impact stock status of depleted shark species.

The US EEZ around Howland, Baker and Jarvis Islands are fished by the US purse seine fleet. In El Nino years these areas become more important. For example, in 1998 approximately 20 percent of US purse seine fishing effort occurred in the US EEZ around the Pacific Remote Island Areas (predominately in the waters around Howland and Baker). During El Nino years, the western warm pool (preferred skipjack habitat) shifts eastward several thousand kilometers, with skipjack following the movement. El Nino frequency is predicted to increase in the future as a result of climate change, indicating the US EEZ will be more important in terms of fishing area in the future^X. Moreover, the WCPFC is reducing high seas fishing effort, and closing high seas completely under the WCPFC has been proposed. The United States should not close its waters around the US Pacific Remote Islands, as these areas will be important to the US tuna industry.



[Source: USCG Protecting America's Fisheries. <http://www.uscg.mil/history/articles/Fisheries.pdf>]

As for ocean acidification, fishermen are impacted by this change in ocean chemistry, which is primarily caused by fossil fuel emissions from cars, airplanes, power plants and factories, and not by fishing operations.

SUGGESTED ACTION

To support the US Pacific Islands and the US fishing industry, and to reduce the nation's seafood deficit and thus provide stronger food security to our nation, the WPRFMC calls upon President Obama to exempt commercial fishing by US vessels in the US EEZ should any marine monuments be created or expanded, and urges that the management of the fisheries remain under the Regional Fishery Management Council process with the Magnuson-Stevens Act given precedence.

The WPRFMC further supports amendments to the Antiquities Act to ensure that no more waters are taken from US fishermen in the Pacific Islands in the name of conservation and for the legacy of a President.

In his book *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, President Obama wrote: "The study of law can be disappointing at times, a matter of applying narrow rules and arcane procedure to an uncooperative reality; a sort of glorified accounting that serves to regulate the affairs of those who have power--and that all too often seeks to explain, to those who do not, the ultimate wisdom and justness of their condition. But that's not all the law is. The law is also memory; the law also records a long-running conversation, a nation arguing with its conscience."

The implementation of the Antiquities Act has been a long-running conversation between the Congressional and Executive Branches.

The US government should not enact a plan that further complicates an historic and economically vital industry. From a global to local perspective, the economic prosperity of American Pacific Islanders is a paramount responsibility for President Obama and his Administration. As it stands, current plans for this most recently proposed marine monument will achieve the opposite by unfairly burdening commercial fisheries that already operate under the world's most stringent regulations. Our government should seek to preserve the livelihoods of American fishermen and provide waters that exclusively serve and provide an advantage for the regulated US fishing industry in the global market. Working to fight illegal fishing and encouraging our own domestic fisheries in accordance with the regulatory guidelines by which they already abide is our best solution to maintaining the sustainable fisheries that President Obama himself praised in his recent remarks.

i <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTLDFGQKxA0>

ii <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/17/fact-sheet-leading-home-and-internationally-protect-our-ocean-and-coasts>

iii http://www.marine-conservation.org/media/filer_public/filer_public/2014/06/17/primnm_expansion_report.pdf

iv <http://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/about/welcome.html>

v http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/MNM/mnm_index.html

vi NOAA U.S. Commercial Landings, Commercial Fishing Landings & Value at Major U.S. Ports 2011-2012

vii Lehodey, P. "Preliminary forecasts of Pacific bigeye tuna population trends under the A2 IPCC scenario." Progress in Oceanography. 2010.

viii There is a long history of US purse seine and longline fishermen assisting the US Coast Guard and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement in detecting illegal foreign fishing.

ix http://www.marine-conservation.org/media/filer_public/2012/11/08/seabird-tuna-workshop-report-2012.pdf

x http://www.spc.int/DigitalLibrary/Doc/FAME/Meetings/SCTB/13/RG_1.pdf



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Sylvia Spalding (808) 383-1069 or Sylvia.Spalding@noaa.gov
For Immediate Release

HONOLULU (WPRFMC) – June 30, 2014 – The voting members of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) from the State of Hawaii, Territories of American Samoa and Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands have analyzed the Obama Administration’s newly announced plan to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. They have determined that it would provide no added conservation benefit to marine resources, but will economically harm the area’s fishermen and those reliant on Pacific marine resources. Noting that the President himself has declared that the United States “has largely ended overfishing in federally managed waters,” the Council members are urging the Administration to continue allowing US fishermen into these areas. According to the WPRFMC, the Administration failed to consult the WPRFMC about the true economic and environmental impacts of its plan to expand the Monument. The WPRFMC also recommends modifications to the Antiquities Act to prevent similar such unilateral declarations in the future, which override existing fisheries management statutes, such as the Magnuson-Steven Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The June 17 announcement, made at the Our Oceans Conference hosted at the State Department, would enlarge the current Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument—established by President Bush in 2009—to encompass the full 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone of seven US Pacific Island Possessions. However, the Council counters in its report that this expansion will ultimately be ineffective in reaching the Obama Administration’s stated goal of combatting threats to the ocean’s health, like overfishing and ocean acidification caused by greenhouse gas pollution.

US fisheries are already required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act to eliminate overfishing, and the US boasts the strongest, most conservation-minded fisheries management in the world.

Fishermen in the region are already subject to catch limits, vessel monitoring, observer requirements, and gear restrictions to ensure that they do not overfish the species they target nor endanger other species in the process. The President’s plan aims to aid marine species like tuna, seabirds, coral reefs, and sharks, but, according to the WPRFMC, it disregards the effective management plans already in place. Because the region’s fish are highly migratory, the Council views the current, more focused international management approach as the most effective move to achieve the Administration’s stated goals, and that the Marine Monuments are superfluous in stopping overfishing.

The value of consulting regional management and local merchants in fisheries management is emphasized by the same Administration that announced this sweeping Executive plan. John Podesta, described by the *Washington Post* as “the man behind President Obama’s new environmental push” has said, “Responsible fishery management grounded in strong science and reinforced by strong partnerships between the fishing, conservation, and science communities is crucial for the economic health of fishing communities and the country as a whole.”

Weighed against any prospective environmental benefit is the serious economic cost to Western Pacific fisheries and fishing communities. The areas covered by the Marine Monument are important for the region’s longline and purse seine fisheries, which were already pushed out of valuable fishing grounds with the original 2009 Pacific Islands Remote Marine Monument designation. Expanding the monuments will sever local fishermen’s access to these resources and in turn strain the island communities that depend on the Pacific for their livelihoods. For this reason, the Council urges the Administration to continue to allow US fishermen into these areas.

A Council authorized by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1400,
Honolulu, Hawaii • Tel (808) 522-8220 • Fax (808) 522-8226 • www.wpcouncil.org

Pacific fishing interests oppose Obama's plan to expand marine reserve

By **Juliet Eilperin** June 30  [Follow @eilperin](#)

In this undated photo released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, a vibrant giant clam is shown at Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in the Line Islands. (AP Photo/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, James Maragos)

When
President

Obama announced two weeks ago he intended to [expand federal protections around seven islands and atolls in the central Pacific Ocean](#), many environmentalists hailed the move as an important step for conservation. But the main group overseeing fishing operators in Hawaii and three U.S. territories in the region declared Monday it opposes the proposal, on the grounds that it would hurt the U.S. fishing industry.

Advertisement

The [Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council](#)--composed of fishing industry representatives as well as some state and federal officials--helps establish fishing policy for both commercial and recreational operators in Hawaii as well as the territories of American Samoa and Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. In a statement released Monday afternoon, members of the quasi-governmental agency said they would oppose any additional limits on commercial fishing in the area.

President George W. Bush used his executive authority to establish the [Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument](#), which now encompasses almost 87,000 square miles, in 2009. Obama is now contemplating widening those boundaries to cover nearly 782,000 square miles of federal waters, which would be off-limits to fishing, energy exploration and other activities. Right now the designation extends 50 miles out from shore; it could be extended as far out as 200 miles from shore around each of the U.S. territories.

The statement, which was approved by the council's executive committee, argues this broad expansion would deprive American fishing operators of an important resource. "U.S. fishermen, including those in the Pacific, already abide by the strictest fishing regulations in the world, and this plan further

inhibits their economic survival," they wrote, adding it would yield "few, if any, ecological benefits from the restrictions."

However Marine Conservation Institute founder and chief scientist [Elliott Norse](#), who has lobbied for the expansion, challenged the council members' assertion that "there is no scientific evidence indicating that the U.S. purse seine and longline fishing vessels operating in the offshore waters" outside the current monument "are impacting seabird populations."

"Fishing for tunas mean there are fewer tunas," Norse said in an interview, adding that the millions of seabirds that nest and forage in the area depend on the area's tuna population. "We would like there to be more tunas in this ecosystem, because they play an important role in that ecosystem."

White House Council on Environmental Quality spokeswoman Keri Fulton wrote in an e-mail the administration has identified the area around the monument "as a special area of focus for future marine protections because it contains some of the most pristine tropical marine ecosystems in the world and is uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change."

"Before making decisions about the geographic scope

and details of these future marine protections, the Administration will seek out the input of commercial and recreational fishermen, scientists, conservation experts, elected officials, and other stakeholders," Fulton added.

[Michael Conathan](#), who directs ocean policy at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank, noted the monument "is very much a work in progress" since the administration will be taking comment on its plan.

"They talk about this as if it's a done deal," Conathan said of the fishery council's statement.

There is also an effort underway in Congress to deny Obama the authority to create a national marine monument under the 1906 Antiquities Act, which presidents from both parties have invoked over the past century. Last week Rep. Steve Southerland, a fierce critic of the administration's ocean policies, introduced a bill that would require congressional approval for any new national monument.

Politics

MENU

Politics Home Midterm Elections Executive Senate House of Representatives Defense Judiciary Scandals

STATE DEPARTMENT

Fishing in murky waters: the administration's secretive oceans policies come under fire

By George Russell

Published July 09, 2014

FoxNews.com



The Obama administration is using its “phone and pen” method of governing by executive action to push its agenda and extend its powers in a huge new area: the Pacific Ocean.

American fishermen are reacting with skepticism, concern and frustration at the latest murky steps to prevent fishing in vast tracts of the Pacific. The proposed expansion was announced along with other White House ocean conservation initiatives on June 16, as the kickoff to a two-day State Department conference aimed at greater international coordination to overcome a variety of ocean ills, including not only overfishing, but marine pollution and ocean acidification -- the last linked by conservationists to global carbon emissions and “climate change.”

[CLICK HERE FOR THE INITIATIVES](#)

The announcements, and the oceans conference itself, also serve a broader purpose: to link a sweeping and controversial U.S. oceans policy the administration began implementing last year with broader international efforts to achieve more ambitious “sustainable” goals at sea, along the world’s coastlines and in the atmosphere by 2020.

The lack of information extends to the current announcement, which is dramatic in tone but not very concrete in detail. According to the administration’s announcement, it will “immediately consider” how to expand protections in the affected Pacific areas, a formulation that leaves plenty of room for maneuvering on the initiatives, even as a State Department spokesman told Fox News that “our goal is to implement them as quickly as possible.”

The additional areas marked for preservation are located around the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, a 77,000 square mile area south and west of Hawaii that was created as a preserve by President George W. Bush in 2006, two-and-a-half years before Barack Obama took office.

“All of this is a terrible, terrible abuse of power.”

- Doc Hastings, the chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources.

According to the White House, the area “contains some of the most pristine tropical marine environments in the world,” which are “also among the most vulnerable areas to the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.”

The current monument area extends about 50 miles out from the speckling of islands that are considered U.S. territory, where commercial fishing and all manner of marine dumping are forbidden. The administration's proposal would likely seek to extend the preserve to the internationally recognized 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone around the U.S. territories, and expand the monument area about ten-fold, to roughly 782,000 sq. miles.

But even there, the administration remains cagey. "Before making decisions about the geographic scope and details of future marine protections," the White House announced, "we will consider the input of fishermen, scientists, conservation experts, elected officials and other stakeholders."

That kind of tactical elusiveness is something that congressional Republicans have long found frustrating, as they tried to block funding for the overall ocean policy, charging that the initiative has never received legislative approval, is not subject to congressional oversight, and that its costs, scope and sources of funding have never been revealed.

"All of this is a terrible, terrible abuse of power," charges Doc Hastings, the chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources. "The president is ruling by executive order, by fiat. Policy on oceans should come through Congress. This is really an example of the administration simply not giving information on what it is doing."

For its part, the administration has declared that no additional funding beyond regular department budgets is being used to implement the overall oceans policy, and it has made no announcements about additional staffing related to the implementation.

The same holds true for the administration's National Oceans Implementation Plan, released in April 2013. "The policy does not create new regulations, supersede current regulations, or modify any agency's established mission, jurisdiction or authority," the document relates. Nor does it "redirect congressionally-appropriated funds, or direct agencies to divert funds from existing programs"—all things that might trigger the legal need for congressional approval.

Instead, it "improves interagency collaboration and prioritization to help focus limited resources and use taxpayer dollars more efficiently."

Yet, at the same time, the plan calls for sweeping restoration of coastal wetlands and coral reefs, an increase in the number of students pursuing marine science and management careers, the use of enhanced sensing systems to examine what is happening in oceans in real time, the carrying out of countless studies, and myriad other activities that normally cost large amounts of additional money.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN](#)

In the case of the just-announced marine preserve expansion, congressional staffers told Fox News specific questions to the administration about the specific location and economic value of the fisheries affected, and the number of fishing boats that would be allowed entry to the protected areas, have not been answered.

In the same circumspect vein, the State Department declined to supply Fox News with a list of the participants in the two-day conference, beyond a publicly available [list of presenters and moderators of various panels and events](#). But the overall audience included representatives of foreign governments, U.S. agencies, some state officials, a variety of environmental non-government organizations, academics and food industry executives -- and not many representatives of the actual fishing industry, according to attendees who spoke with Fox News.

"We didn't get invited to the State Department conference," an official with one U.S. fishing group told Fox News. "But we are pretty concerned about this. They are restricting U.S. territory while others remain open. And no matter what they say, they keep hiring more people to administer things, and they are ordering up new research vessels. Our fishery is going away. The U.S. seems to just keep giving up territory."

The State Department conference also generated a highly ambitious "action plan" with even more sweeping environmental

targets for ocean ecosystems to be completed by 2020. These include an end to overfishing of all marine fishing stocks worldwide by that date; and conservation of 10 percent of all coastal marine areas, and 20 percent of all coastal ecosystems, including tidal marshes and coral reefs.

The action plan further includes a commitment to "stem the increase in ocean acidification by reducing carbon emissions, including in the context of a new agreement that will be applicable to all under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change."

That is a reference to a successor agreement to the now-defunct Kyoto Protocol that the U.S. signed but never ratified, which is now being negotiated with Obama administration participation. The pact is supposed to be fully prepared by next year, and also take effect in 2020.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE ACTION PLAN](#)

When it comes to providing input to the administration's expanded preserve plans, however, a number of important stakeholders have already spoken -- against them.

The proposed restrictions are "unnecessary," and enforcing them would be "overstepping currently managed sustainable management regimes, reducing US fisheries competitiveness, and yielding few, if any, ecological benefits," according to a report issued two weeks after the State Department conference by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council -- a group created by the federal government itself.

The group also declared that the administration "failed to consult the [Council] about the true economic and environmental impacts of its plan to expand the Monument," which overrides existing fishery management legislation.

The fishermen also charge that the expanded preserves will almost entirely affect U.S. fishing vessels, which they argue are already the best managed and most supervised in the world, even though any overfishing in the vast Pacific involves a variety of international fleets, and notably these days a rapidly increasing flotilla from China.

The target for much of the fishing effort are tuna and mackerel and their kin, high-value food sources that are not heavily fished in the waters that would suddenly join the expanded preserve areas, but could become much more productive in future years, when El Nino currents change Pacific warming patterns and push fish stocks further into the reserve waters. But even then, U.S. fishing vessels are likely to honor the no-go areas, and others may not.

Moreover, according to Ray Hilborn, a professor in the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences at University of Washington and a renowned authority on global fish populations, the marine preserves embody a zoological contradiction. They are supposedly intended to protect fish such as tuna that are "highly migratory" and travel thousands of miles during their life-span.

"The areas proposed are too small to impact the stock status of large tuna populations that span the Pacific Ocean," he told Fox News. "These are token closures and will have no real impact on the fishes of the ocean."

Another highly regarded expert on fishing stocks, Carl Walters of the University of British Columbia, agrees. "You would need to substantially close the entire Western Pacific," he told Fox News. The kind of 20 percent standards that are being set now are not very effective."

The experts also rebut the notion that the condition of all tuna species and other big food fish like marlin and swordfish is necessarily dire. "Big tuna are overfished but not to a catastrophic extent," says Walters, although he adds that some species, notably highly prized blue fin tuna, are "in pretty bad shape."

Most others "need to be managed," but the real urgency is an end to "pathological" subsidies given to fishing fleets from European countries like Spain, which encourages vast amounts of overfishing and real changes in behavior for aggressive fleets such as those of Taiwan.

(North American fishing fleets, Walters adds, "are not subsidized the same way," and have had trouble staying afloat economically.)

"The best solution to address overfishing of highly migratory stocks, Hilborn says, "is working cooperatively within the international community on science-based measures, monitoring compliance, and tough consequences for non-compliance."

According to another international fisheries official who talked with Fox News, however, the only country that can truly enforce that strict -- and likely expensive -- compliance is the U.S.

Meantime, said one person familiar with proceedings at the State Department conference, "they are chipping away relentlessly at legitimate U.S. fishing."

George Russell is editor-at-large of Fox News and can be found on Twitter [@GeorgeRussell](#)

[Click here for more stories by George Russell](#)

Also on the Web

If You Have A Balance On Your Credit Card You May Be Making A Big Mistake (*NextAdvisor Daily*)

Are You a Social Security Double-Dipper? Perhaps Not Much Longer (*AARP*)

How to Pay Off Debt with 18 Months of No Interest (*NextAdvisor Daily*)

Oldest-Ever Congressman Ousted After 17 Terms (*AARP*)

The West is Red: 2014 Senate Races (*GND News*)

Hillary's Straw Man Argument Against Second Amendment Backfires (*GND News*)

More from Fox News

IRS scandal: Lois Lerner's 'perfect' method for hiding emails (*Opinion*)

'Naked and Afraid' participants share naked truth (*Entertainment*)

McCain slams immigration official for restrictions on lawmakers at border centers (*Politics*)

EPA to block Alaska's proposed Pebble Mine over salmon risk (*Politics*)

Southern border immigration crisis comes to tiny Michigan town (*Politics*)

Obama kills time amid border crisis (*Politics*)

Recommended by

Watch now...



Woman accidentally sends nude selfie to her dad



Obama's presidency in shambles?



Karl Rove's predictions for 2014 midterm elections



Senator Murkowski introduces legislation blocking Obama declaration of vast Pacific closed area

SEAFOODNEWS.COM [SCOM] -- July 21, 2014 -- Senator Lisa Murkowski has introduced legislation requiring congressional approval of any new national monument designation considered by the President.

The bill, the Improved National Monument Designation Process Act (S. 2608), would block the Obama Administration from unilaterally using the Antiquities Act to lock up millions of acres of public lands and waters.

“Alaskans know what happens when the President unilaterally closes millions of acres of public lands – it means a loss of jobs and a hit to the economy,” said Senator Murkowski, Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and Co-Chair of the Senate Oceans Caucus.

President Obama has repeatedly expressed interest in using the Antiquities Act to unilaterally establish new national monuments or expand the boundaries of existing monuments. His most recent action – expanding the boundaries of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument from 77,020 to more than 782,000 square miles – is “a stark reminder of the sweeping, unilateral actions that the executive branch can take,” Murkowski said.

“My legislation is designed to ensure that our oceans are not locked away with a stroke of the President’s pen,” Murkowski said. “The continued foreclosure of our lands and waters threatens economic activities from fishing to exploration for oil and natural gas.”

Murkowski’s legislation would amend the Antiquities Act to require:

- Congressional approval prior to any national monument designation; and
- Application of the National Environmental Policy Act.

The bill would also require any national monument proposed within an exclusive economic zone meet the following requirements:

- Specific authorization by an Act of Congress;
- Approval by each state legislature within 100 miles of the proposed monument; and
- A stakeholder review process prior to the implementation of any restrictions on public uses within the designated area.

Comments praising this initiative:

"Federal fisheries management in waters off Alaska is successful because it is science-based and because conservation measures are developed through a transparent public process that encourages stakeholder engagement," says Stephanie Madsen of the At-Sea Processors Association. "Management actions, including area closures designed to meet different conservation objectives, are not issued by fiat. We applaud Senator Murkowski for updating the 100-year old Antiquities Act to reflect current best practices for open, participatory government."

"We applaud Senator Murkowski's leadership in introducing legislation that places reasonable limits on the President's power to make far reaching conservation land withdrawals in all 50 states, both onshore and off," said Rick Rogers, Executive Director of the Resource Development Council for Alaska.

"United Fishermen of Alaska is pleased to hear of Senator Murkowski's legislation to require Congressional approval of any National Monument designation. Decisions regarding closing our oceans should be made carefully, and UFA applauds Senator Murkowski's efforts to ensure that the impacts to stakeholders are thoroughly considered in a public process," said Julianne Curry, Executive Director, United Fishermen of Alaska.

"The fisheries off Alaska's coast are highly complex, involving multiple species, vast fishing grounds, and different fishing gear. The Magnuson-Stevens Act provides an open, public process for stakeholders to help in the development of conservation measures that protect our fishery resources and the marine environment. On the other hand, decisions under the Antiquities Act are made behind closed doors. Closing off areas of Alaska's fisheries could devastate Alaska's fishing communities, so we believe Congress needs to be part of the decision-making process," said Joe Plesha, General Counsel, Trident Seafoods.

This story originally appeared on Seafoodnews.com, a subscription site. It has been reprinted with permission.

Tuna, Conservation and the Race for the U.S. Senate

U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz and U.S. Rep. Hanabusa discuss the Obama administration's proposal to create the largest marine sanctuary in the world in Hawaii's backyard.

JULY 24, 2014 · By NICK GRUBE

On June 17, when President Barack Obama announced he wanted to create the world's largest marine sanctuary in the south-central Pacific Ocean, many in Hawaii had the same question:

What about the ahi?

Obama's proposal would expand the protections around several nearby islands, meaning certain sects of Hawaii's fishing fleet might not be able to dip their nets or cast their lines in those waters anymore.

It also meant that Hawaii's longliners, who pull in tuna, marlin and other species, could feel an unexpected pinch if Obama uses his executive powers to cordone off the area to commercial fishermen.

The gravity of the situation has not been lost on the Democratic candidates running to fill out the final two years of the late U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye's six-year term.

Both U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz and U.S. Rep. Hanabusa have said they worry about the impacts to one of the state's most iconic industries.

Joel Abroad-Flickr



Schatz has said he's already reached out to senior presidential advisor John Podesta, one of the administration's leaders charged with carrying out the plan, to find out exactly what's at stake for Hawaii.

"We are strongly supportive of conservation, but we also believe that our longline fishery is sustainable and should not be caught up in an



*Fresh ahi after the fish auction, Pier 38, Honolulu,
August 2013.*

effort to crack down on the bad actors throughout the rest of the Pacific,” Schatz told Civil Beat in a recent interview.

“Our fishery in particular and our longline fleet — which is not enormous — is really important to our culture in terms of ahi. It (also has) a real economic impact.”

The senator, who has been endorsed by Obama, is generally open to the president’s idea of expanding the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, which was first established by George W. Bush in 2009.

The monument protects 50 square miles around seven uninhabited, U.S.-controlled islands and atolls. Under Obama’s proposal that area could be expanded to 200 square miles to protect fish, coral and other marine life.

Companion components of Obama’s plan to protect ocean resources include combatting black-market seafood fraud and studying the effects of ocean acidification as it relates to climate change.

assistance when
the monuments.”
Pacific Regional
Council

But where Schatz expresses optimism over the administration’s conservation goals, his opponent casts a wary eye.

“Before the president takes this action I would like to have a better sense as to why,” Hanabusa said. “What’s the end game? What’s the purpose?”

Protecting Papahānaumokuākea



Hanabusa is particularly worried about how Obama’s proposal will affect fishing around the Hawaiian islands.

Specifically, she said she wants assurances that the sanctuary expansion will not involve Papahānaumokuākea, which George W. Bush designated as a monument in 2006.

The congresswoman said Podesta has told her that Obama’s plan doesn’t currently include Papahānaumokuākea, but because the president still has ultimate authority over what becomes a monument she will remain skeptical.

“The question we asked is Papahānaumokuākea being expanded,” Hanabusa said. “If Papahānaumokuākea is expanded to 200 miles, if you look at where it is, it will possibly cover as much as a portion of Oahu. But it would definitely cover Niihau and Kauai. That’s a problem.”

To date there’s still been no indication from anyone involved that Obama’s proposal will include the chain of islands northwest of the main Hawaiian isles. The proposal only includes Wake, Baker, Howland and Jarvis Islands as well as the Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll.

But even if Papahānaumokuākea is spared — and, again, it’s not currently a part of president’s proposal — Hanabusa said designating the south-central Pacific islands under the monument status could still hurt the state’s commercial fishing fleet more than she’s willing to accept.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Obama’s proposal, if implemented to its fullest extent, could affect 164 licensed vessels that are part of the Hawaii deep-set longline fishery.

FISHERY	NUMBER OF PERMITS	TOTAL ECONOMIC VALUE FOR 2013	5% OF THE ECONOMIC FOR 2013
PRIA Troll	6	~\$9 million	\$450,000
Hawaii Deep-set Longline	164	~\$80 million	\$4 million
WCPO Purse Seine	40	~\$318 million	\$15.9 million

NOAA estimates that in 2013 fishery had an economic value of approximately \$80 million. Should the marine sanctuaries in the south-central Pacific be expanded, the federal agency projects a 5 percent loss in value, or about \$4 million.

NOAA projects that the two other fisheries affected by the proposal — the Pacific Remote Island Troll and the Western Central Pacific Ocean purse seine fleet — could also lose more than \$16 million dollars of its estimated \$327 million value.

“There are different implications as to what and how it’s going to affect Hawaii in terms of the fishing industry that we have,” Hanabusa said. “The most troubling part about it is not really knowing, and so a lot of people are guessing at what it means and how (the sanctuary) is going to expand.”

An Unfair Burden?



One group that has voiced loud opposition to Obama's marine sanctuary proposal is the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, known as Wespac.

Two weeks after the president said he wanted to use his power to "protect some of our most precious marine landscape," Wespac released a 10-page memo denouncing the plan for placing a regulatory and economic burden on U.S. fishermen in the Pacific, specifically Hawaii and American Samoa.

Among other things, the group argued that the expansion of the monument would do little to rebuild fish stocks, that it would be difficult to enforce and that it would not have the ecological benefits intended.



U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabusa at Civil Beat on March 21, 2014

Wespac also argued that the U.S. would lose even more of its already diminishing competitive advantage with foreign vessels because U.S. fisherman would be banned from working in large swaths of American waters.

"President Obama's continued aspiration for a strong legacy concerning environmental issues is commendable, but his plan for the U.S. Pacific Islands unfairly penalizes the

U.S. fishermen and seafood consumers who depend on this resource," the Wespac memo states.

"U.S. fishermen, including those in the Pacific, already abide by the strictest fishing regulations in the world, and this plan further inhibits their economic survival."

The group suggested that if the administration moves forward with the monument expansion that it allow commercial fishing by U.S. vessels to continue in the waters around the current monument.

It also supported amending the Antiquities Act of 1906, which gives Obama the authority to designate monuments.

Doing this, Wespac argues, would "ensure that no more waters are taken from U.S. fishermen in the Pacific Islands in the name of conservation and for the legacy of a President."

ation moves
n efforts is to
industry has a
let treated in
ates.” — U.S.

Wespac’s criticisms shouldn’t be too surprising. The group, which is often at odds with conservationists, spoke out during the Bush administration’s campaign to designate marine monuments in the Pacific in 2006 and 2009.

In fact, Wespac’s opposition to the sanctuaries was so prolific that the New York Times editorialized about it in 2008, noting that the group is “notorious among environmental groups as a chronic enabler of reckless commercial fishing.”

The editorial board even quoted Westpac Executive Director Kitty Simond as saying that Bush’s proposals at the time were punishment of the “brown and yellow people” of American Samoa and the Northern Marianas.

Simond was unavailable for comment this week, but Wespac Senior Scientist Paul Dalzell stood by his group’s assessment of Obama’s proposal.

He called the sanctuaries little more than “paper parks” because the remoteness means islands and atolls are not subject to “human pressures” associated with more populated areas.

“If you look at the creation of marine national monuments by the two administrations they have been exclusively in the West Pacific region,” Dalzell said.

“That would suggest that because we have small populations and limited representation in Congress we are much easier. We’re the line of least resistance when it comes to creating these monuments.”

Staying in the Loop



Both Hanabusa and Schatz made clear that Hawaii’s fishermen — and U.S. longliners in general — must be part of any discussion going forward.

Hanabusa tends to put her trust in Wespac in terms of management of the Pacific fisheries.

She said the group has done a good job monitoring the commercial fishing industry, and that fishermen are at a disadvantage when it comes to competing with international fleets that don’t have to abide by the same rules.

“That’s what a lot of the frustration has been with our fishermen is that they’re under heavy scrutiny,” Hanabusa said. “It’s almost like we’re scrutinizing our fishermen but (for) the real violators there’s no consequence.”



U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz at a Civil Beat on March 20, 2014.

Schatz echoed this sentiment, saying that Hawaii’s longliners seem to be operating in a sustainable manner.

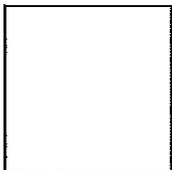
At the same time he reiterated that it’s important to remain diligent as the administration molds its final proposal, which the president can enact through his executive branch powers.

“The statute under which they’re operating pretty much gives total flexibility to accommodate local needs, technical knowledge, (and) the latest research,” Schatz said.

“Our job as the administration moves forward with conservation efforts is to make sure that our local industry has a voice here and doesn’t get treated in the same category as pirates.”

A town hall meeting on Obama’s proposal is scheduled for Aug. 11 at the Ala Moana Hotel. That’s two days after the Aug. 9 primary.

About the Author



CIVIL BEAT STAFF

Nick Grube  

Nick Grube is a reporter for Civil Beat. You can reach him by email at nick@civilbeat.com or follow him on Twitter at [@nickgrube](https://twitter.com/nickgrube).

Discussion



What, if anything, do you think the federal delegation can do to make sure Hawaii's interests are taken into consideration as the Obama administration moves ahead with its ocean conservation

Star Advertiser

Monday, August 25, 2014 84.0°F

POSTED: 01:30 a.m. HST, Aug 24, 2014

STAR-ADVERTISER / 2006



Laysan albatross gathered on the lagoon beach of Eastern Island, Midway Atoll, in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument.

www.staradvertiser.com > EditorialsPremium > Guest Editorials Premium >

ISLAND VOICES

[Print](#) [Email](#) [Comment](#) | [View 4 Comments](#) [Most Popular](#) [Save Post](#) [Retweet](#)

Expanding marine national monument would harm U.S. and Hawaii fisheries

By Peter Apo

From a little boy born in Honolulu to the president of the United States, Barack Obama has traveled a literal and figurative distance. In his own words, Hawaii offered him "a basis for the values that I hold most dear," and his executive actions benefiting the environment today may stem from years spent in the Pacific.

However, in seeking to stand out as an environmental steward in his second term, President Obama seems to have lost touch with his birthplace. His latest plan to create an environmental legacy would use unilateral action to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM). Citing executive authority under the Antiquities Act, Obama in June announced the proposal from 5,000 miles away without consulting the very citizens who are at risk of losing their traditions and livelihoods. If enacted, the monument's expansion would impact Hawaii's longline fishery, which supplies the Hawaiian Islands and U.S. mainland with the majority of ahi and swordfish. Fishery managers, local officials and

fishermen who rely on these waters are understandably astounded by this failure in outreach and consideration.

The present monument, established in 2009, encompasses the 50 nautical miles surrounding seven U.S. islands and atolls, banning all commercial activities, including fishing. But under the president's plan, the boundaries would be expanded up to the full 200-nautical mile limit of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding these islands.

Several issues make this proposal a bad deal for U.S. Pacific Island fishermen, U.S. seafood consumers, and true conservation and management of the ocean.

Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Island territories and possessions already account for 90 percent of the nation's marine protected areas. Apart from Hawaii's congressional delegation, these areas have no voting representation, and thus limited political influence, in Washington. The result is the U.S. Pacific Islands being forced to bear the brunt of a conservation strategy on which it has little to no say.

By expanding the monument, regional fishermen will be forced out of important fishing grounds, which have supported generations of Pacific Islanders. They will have to fish either in international waters or other nations' waters. This will cost more in the high fees paid to other countries to access their EEZs. Restricting available U.S. fishing grounds only hurts our fishing-supported territorial economies.

The proposed expansion disregards years of successful management under comprehensive, inclusively developed domestic fishery management plans and international fishery management measures endorsed by the federal government and acknowledged by Obama himself.

The current boundaries of the PRIMNM already protect vulnerable habitats like coral reefs, and the migratory species that pass through these offshore areas do not spend enough time in them to likely benefit from monument expansion.

Aside from stifling local U.S. fishing economies in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, the proposed expansion would substantially undermine efforts toward ending illegal fishing and overfishing. Restricting U.S. fishermen from the area makes it easier for unregulated foreign vessels to illegally fish U.S. waters without detection. The result instead would replace American caught seafood with product from foreign competitors, who already account for 90 percent of the seafood consumed in the United States.

In communities such as ours, where fishing traditions have sustained us for generations, our families deserve leadership that considers their needs and represents their interests. Obama should reconsider the implications of closing off U.S. waters from U.S. fishermen around the existing boundaries of the PRIMNM. If the monument is to be expanded, it must first be functional. The president must allow well-regulated U.S. commercial fishing to continue in these waters.

MORE FROM THE STAR-ADVERTISER

Oceans apart

Fisheries council members criticize sanctuary growth plan

Penalties sought for fishing in Pacific marine protection areas



VIDEO: Opposition Mounts to Obama's Proposed Pacific Monument Expansion at Honolulu Town Hall Listening Session

On August 11 in Honolulu at a "town hall" listening session hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a range of affected stakeholders offered their strong opposition to President Obama's proposed expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM). A video released by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) highlights their statements and concerns.

Honolulu (PRWEB) August 25, 2014

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) has released a video compilation of concerns raised about anticipated negative consequences of the Obama Administration's proposed expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM). The Council's video highlights a diverse group of scientists, fishermen, community members, and Council members who spoke out in opposition to the proposed Monument expansion at an August 11 Federal listening session in Honolulu.

According to those rising in opposition to the proposal, the Monument would cause substantial economic losses to local fisheries and would stifle the traditional Pacific Islands fishing culture that has sustained local communities for centuries.

Additional concerns were raised that the proposed Monument expansion would increase the domestic American seafood market's reliance on imported seafood, often sourced from countries whose standards for fisheries management are less stringent than our own. Participants noted that because U.S. Pacific fisheries are already some of the most highly regulated fisheries in the world, the Monument expansion would provide little in the way of additional benefits to already protected coral reefs and highly migratory pelagic fish species.

The "town hall" listening session to gather public comments was held at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu and was hosted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Federal officials did not record the event. The attached video is a compilation of amateur footage taken by participants and attendees, and compiled by the WPRFMC.

Below is a list of speakers appearing in the video, listed in order of appearance:

- Ed Watamura - Advisory Panel Chair, WPRFMC; President, Waialua Boat Club
- Edwin Ebisui - Vice Chair, WPRFMC
- Ricardo DeRosa - Purse Seine Fisherman, American Samoa
- Pierre Kleiber - Retired, NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center
- Makani Christensen - Native Hawaiian Commercial Fisherman
- Neil Kanemoto - President, Pacific Island Fisheries Group
- Bob Fram - President, Garden and Valley Isle Seafood
- Roy Morioka - Hawai'i Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition
- Tony Costa - Nearshore Fisherman
- Brooks Takenaka - Assistant General Manager, The United Fish Agency (The Honolulu Fish Auction)
- Frank Farm - President, Alii Holo Kai Dive Club
- Steven Lee - Hawai'i Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition
- Sean Martin - President, Hawai'i Longline Association

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) is one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to oversee our nation's fisheries. It is based in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Contact Information

Sylvia Spalding

Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management
Council

<http://www.wpcouncil.org/>

+1 (808) 383-1069

ensuring we do not add extra bureaucracy to American harvesters playing by the rules.” — *Melissa Wood*

Regional councils blast Oceana bycatch report

Find ‘variety of substantial errors’

With its report on U.S. fisheries bycatch, the environmental group Oceana has fostered something rare: agreement among the eight federal regional fishery management councils concerning the report’s flaws.

The first installment of its bycatch report, “Wasted Catch,” released in March, provoked a response from the Regional Fishery Management Council Coordination Committee. It sent Oceana a letter listing numerous problems the councils have with the report.

The June 18 letter says “a variety of substantial errors, omissions, and organizational approaches... may seriously miscommunicate bycatch information.” It also calls for the report to be retracted until Oceana staffers “have the time and/or

resources to develop a better understanding of the data summarized in the report.”

The committee says Oceana relied excessively on NMFS’ National Bycatch Report. A wide variety of other NMFS and council documents also describe and contextualize bycatch information, the letter notes.

The criticism didn’t stop Oceana from releasing “Wasted Cash,” part two of its bycatch report, in late June. It pegs the annual cost of bycatch at \$1 billion.

“Fisheries need to take the same steps other successful businesses do to cut waste and increase efficiency. In most cases, fishermen have the means and knowledge to make these changes, but lack the economic incentives to do so,” said Oceana marine scientist Amanda Keledjian, one of the report’s authors.

Industry groups say bycatch reduction efforts have been happening for years. New Atlantic scallop dredges ended that fishery’s problems with sea turtles. Circle hooks did the same for longliners, and now the priority to reduce haddock bycatch is closing New England herring fishing. — *Kirk Moore*

Ebisui, a Hawaii commercial fisherman.

Professor Ray Hilborn of the University of Washington’s School of Aquatics and Fishery Sciences, says he agrees with the council’s stance.

“It is pretty clear that the MPA actions won’t help solve ocean acidification or marine pollution and also won’t help fisheries in the Pacific where overfishing isn’t generally an issue,” Hilborn says. “They’ll say that it’s protecting the ocean into the future, but we have a lot more immediate problems to solve.” — *Charlie Ess*

Cook Inlet group appeals 2012 setnet fishery ruling

Judge says managers acted properly

The Cook Inlet Fisherman’s Fund has filed an appeal with the Alaska Supreme Court regarding Superior Court Judge Andrew Guidi’s June decision upholding state management of the 2012 commercial setnet salmon fishery.

The nonprofit group sued the Alaska Department of Fish and Game last July. It asserted that managers’ actions were inconsistent with Alaska Board of Fisheries measures that would provide for adequate king salmon escapement and optimize the 2012 sockeye harvest.

Those actions, setnetters argued, cut them out of prime commercial fishing time. Fishermen say they lost a substantial amount of income because the fishing restrictions allowed sockeyes to swim past.

At oral arguments in May, the Cook Inlet group’s Juneau-based attorney, Bruce Weyhrauch, petitioned for the case to be opened for discovery in hopes that more details that would support fishermen’s arguments might be revealed.

“The commercial fishing association wanted to find out why the department departed from the plans as they were approved by the board,” Weyhrauch says.

On June 2, Guidi granted Fish and Game’s request for a summary judgment. Guidi ruled that the fishermen failed to demonstrate how the department overstepped its bounds.

Guidi ruled in the state’s favor again in late June, ordering the Cook Inlet group to pay 20 percent (\$12,924) of what the state spent defending itself in the lawsuit.

— *Charlie Ess*

“The president’s plan unfairly penalizes U.S. fishermen and seafood consumers who depend on this resource.”

— *Kitty Simonds, Western Regional Pacific Fishery Management Council*

alaska& pacific

Council critical of plan to expand marine monument

Marine park would cover 782,000 square miles under president’s proposal

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council laid out its concerns with White House plans to enlarge the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument during a June 25 press conference in Honolulu.

The Obama plan was unveiled June 17 at the Our Ocean conference in Washington, D.C. It would expand the monument created in 2009 from 87,000 square

miles to nearly 782,000 square miles.

Western Pacific council members say doing so won’t provide any added conservation benefits. But they add, expansion will cause serious economic harm to area longline and purse seine fishermen.

“The president’s aspiration for a strong legacy concerning environmental issues is commendable. However, his plan for the U.S. Pacific Islands unfairly penalizes U.S. fishermen and seafood consumers who depend on this resource,” said Kitty Simonds, the council’s executive director.

“Any type of curtailment of domestic fishing in domestic waters is really an impediment and sets us back in time and makes us even more dependent on imports,” added council member Edwin

Kitty Simonds questions the benefits of a Pacific marine monument expansion.



WPRFMC

An Ocean Legacy

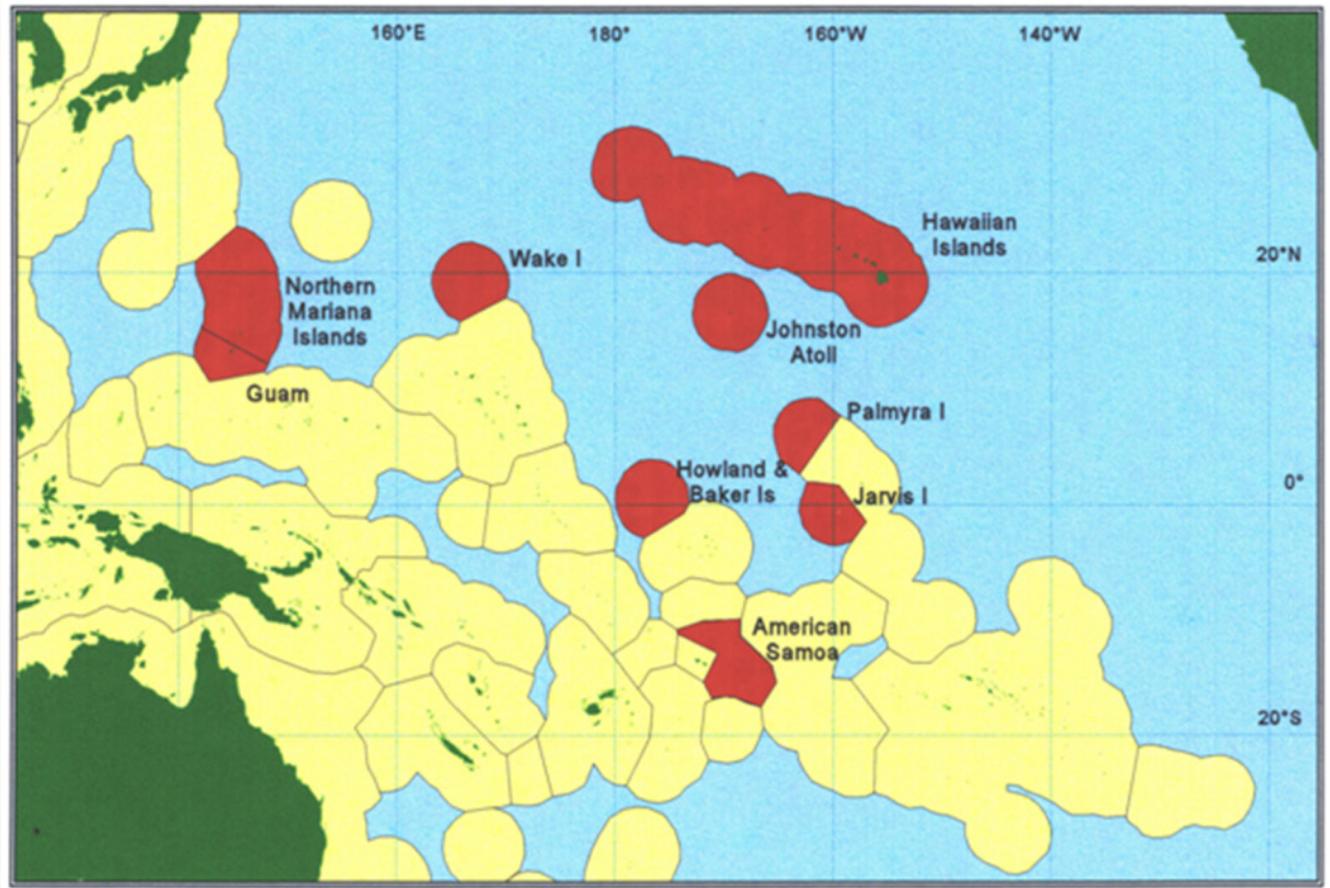
The US Pacific Island Way



**Prepared by the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
for the White House Council on Environmental Quality
September 9, 2014
(revised September 16, 2014)**



Why the US Pacific Islands Oppose Monument Expansion



1. **Negatively impacts US Pacific Islands and US fisheries**
2. **US and international ocean policy and laws already exist**
3. **Lacks conservation benefits**
4. **Well managed, sustainable fisheries is a better ocean legacy
– the US Pacific Island Way**

“Fishing Is the Ocean and Fishing Is Life ...”

Lt. Gov. Lemanu Peleti Mauga
American Samoa

Broad Opposition to Expansion of Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument



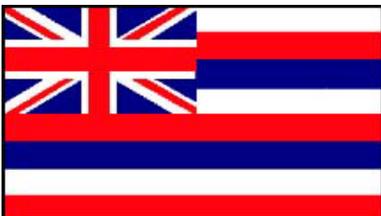
Governor Lolo Moliga, American Samoa
Governor Eddie Balza Calvo, Guam
Governor Eloy Inos, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)



American Samoa Legislature
CNMI Legislature
CNMI Mayors of Saipan, Northern Islands, Rota, and Tinian and Aguiguan
Democratic Party of American Samoa



American Samoa Chamber of Commerce
Guam Fishermen's Cooperative Association
Tuatai o Samoa Longline & Fishing Association
United Fishing Agency
Hawaii Longline Association
Pacific Islands Fisheries Group
Hawaii Fishermen's Alliance for Conservation and Tradition
America Tuna Boat Association



Tri Marine Group
StarKist
Bumble Bee Seafoods
Garden and Valley Isle Seafood
Marine Conservation Alliance
National Fisherman
Waialua Boat Club
Alii Holo Kai
Na Koa Ikaika o Ka Lahui Hawaii (Affiliate of Indigenous World Association)
Professor Ray Hilborn, University of Washington
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council
General public

Concerns also raised by US Senator Brian Schatz and US Representative Colleen Hanabusa

“I also request that the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) extend Town Hall meetings to American Samoa and other U.S. Territories that will be affected by any expansion of the PRIMNM.”

---US Congressman Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, American Samoa (July 18, 2014)

“Policy on oceans should come through Congress. This is really an example of the administration simply not giving information on what it is doing.”

---Doc Hastings, Chairman, US House Committee on Natural Resources

“Mr. President, the available data affirms the fact that the loss of fishing grounds due to the proposed expansion will translate to fisheries related economic loss caused by the decline in the supply of fish to the canneries which will no doubt trigger an economic recession for the Territory of American Samoa’s economy. The cannery employs 1/3 of the American Samoa workforce. It means that a total of 2,177 jobs will be lost within the tuna cannery industry if this expansion goes through.”

---Governor Lolo Moliga, Territory of American Samoa (August 14, 2014)

“Alaskans know what happens when the President unilaterally closes millions of acres of public lands---it means a loss of jobs and a hit to the economy.”

---US Senator Lisa Murkowski, Alaska,

“It is also demoralizing and quite disturbing that the proponents for the expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument are individuals who have no basic understanding of what such actions will do to the lives of the people who will be shattered by these ‘feel good’ national initiatives.”

--Governor Lolo Moliga, Territory of American Samoa (July 21, 2014)

“As Governor, I hope you will appreciate my perspective on how implementing an advocacy-based conservation agenda under the Antiquities Act can negatively affect the island communities in the Western Pacific. The Marianas archipelago is home of the Marianas Trench Mariana National Monument, a paper park that has been mostly neglected since it was designated in 2009. ... I find it ironic that the primary purpose of Congress for passing the Antiquities Act was specifically to protect the culture and heritage of Native American Indians. Now, one hundred and eight years later, this very same law is being used to threaten the culture and heritage of native Pacific Islanders.”

---Governor Eloy S. Inos, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (August 15, 2014)

“Conservationists describe the water as pristine, which implies that any human activity that has taken place over the years has had no deleterious effect. And you’ve banning fishing ... why?”

---*National Fisherman* (August 28, 2014)

“Given the good condition and low use of the marine resources in the PRIMNM area, the Nation should manage the PRIA [Pacific Remote Island Area] using the best contemporary marine resource management practices, as described in the *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Taskforce*. Therefore, I humbly request that the expansion of the current Monument boundaries be tabled,”

---Governor Eddie Baza Calvo, Territory of Guam

“Our government should seek to preserve the livelihoods of our fishermen and provide waters that exclusively serve to provide an advantage for the regulated US and local fishing industry in the global market.”

---Senate Concurrent Resolution 33-20, American Samoa 33rd Legislature (August 14, 2014)

“The director general of the Forum Fisheries Agency, James Movick, says the U.S. move could drive longliners into the southern seas, further depleting the very stock the small island states are trying to conserve. ... It’s hard to see what precise management benefit would be obtained by that.”

---islandbusiness.com

“The Obama Administration’s proposed monument expansion joins a lengthy list of historical restrictions on US Pacific Island fishermen.”

---Na Koa Ikaika o Ka Lahui Hawaii (Affiliate of Indigenous World Association)

“The key question with respect to the expanded protections proposed by President Obama is what will they do to aid solutions to the problems facing oceans. I am afraid the answer to this is they will do nothing! Closing additional areas to fishing will have no impact on ocean acidification or ocean pollution, and the impact of these closures on overfishing will almost certainly be negligible.”

---Professor Ray Hilborn, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, University of Washington
(August 4, 2014)

Pelagic Fisheries Are Important to the US Pacific Islands and the Nation

Hawaii Longline Fishery

A major domestic fish producer

- 80% of US bigeye tuna
- 50% of US swordfish
- 50% of US yellowfin tuna

A major supplier to total US market including imports

- 60% of US bigeye tuna market
- 14% of US swordfish market
- 4% of US yellowfin tuna market



Only 2% of Hawaii longline landings are exported.

Hawaii seafood consumption three times national average per capita.

Hawaii fishery is fresh (iced, not frozen) resulting in highest quality.

Honolulu harbor ranks 5th in the nation in landed seafood value (\$100 M).

US Purse Seine Fishery

All US Purse Seine vessels offload in American Samoa for canning at StarKist Samoa and Tri Marine

The fleet delivers approximately \$60 million in tuna annually to American Samoa canneries

American Samoa is considered a Small Island Developing State (SIDS)

- Per capita income: \$8,000
- US poverty level: ~\$13,000 (HI)



The local economy and approximately 5,000 jobs are dependent on tuna processing

Approximately 65% of American Samoa government revenue comes from federal grants, which will increase if fish landings decrease.

Guam and CNMI Tuna Fisheries

Guam and CNMI are located three to four hours flying time from every East and Southeast Asian country and have a history of US tuna fisheries, including pole-and-line fishing, purse seining, longlining and transshipment. Guam and CNMI are Small Island Developing States. While other Pacific Islands are actively developing their tuna fisheries with strong support from their governments, the US has undertaken policies such as closing off fishing waters that undermine rather than support fisheries in Guam and the CNMI.

Existing US and International Management Protects the Pacific Remote Islands and Tuna Resources

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA, 1976)

- Nation's primary fisheries management law
- Created 8 fishery management councils
- US fisheries managed under MSA are sustainable and responsible
- National Standards prevent overfishing and require use of best available scientific information
- Requires consistency with other applicable law (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Highly Migratory Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, National Environmental Policy Act)

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council

1986- Prohibited drift gill netting and bottom trawling throughout US Pacific Ocean (1.5 million square miles)

1987- Pioneered Vessel Monitoring System for fisheries globally

1990- Fostered inclusion of tuna under MSA

1992- Established spatial management areas for Hawaii longline fishery

1994- Established Hawaii longline limited entry program

1998- Hosted & supported international meetings leading to formation of the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

2001- Created the first fishery ecosystem plan in nation (coral reefs)

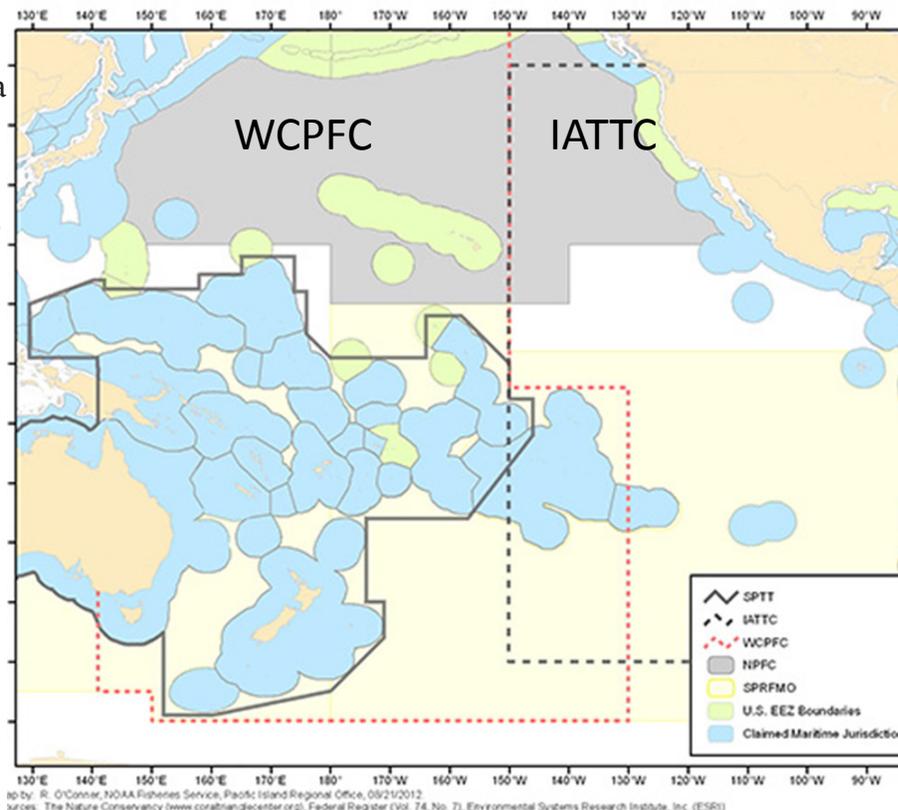
2004- First in nation to implement sea turtle hard cap

2009- Established place-based Fishery Ecosystem Plans for US Pacific Islands Region

2014- Initiated 100% daily electronic reporting in Hawaii longline fleet--- first in Pacific

International Management

- Management measures for tuna and tuna-like species are developed by Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. The United States is a party to both of these regional fishery management organizations.



Map by: R. O'Connor, NOAA Fisheries Service, Pacific Island Regional Office, 05/21/2012
Sources: The Nature Conservancy (www.coraltrianglecenter.org), Federal Register (Vol. 74, No. 7), Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI)

Highly Migratory Tuna Fisheries Are Dynamic

Location of Fish and Fishing Effort Fluctuates

Where fish are caught is determined by where the fish are located, which fluctuates with climate and oceanographic factors. Location of fishing effort is also determined by economic factors, such as fuel costs, and management and political measures, such as fishing restrictions that impact certain geographical areas.

HAWAII LONGLINE IN US PACIFIC REMOTE ISLANDS

YEAR	% of Effort (hooks)
2000	16 percent
2001	13 percent
2002	14 percent



US PURSE SEINE IN US PACIFIC REMOTE ISLANDS

YEAR	VOLUME (mt)	% of CATCH
1997	29,929 / 144,484	21 percent
1998	17,126 / 174,156	10 percent
1999	10,440 / 174,692	6 percent

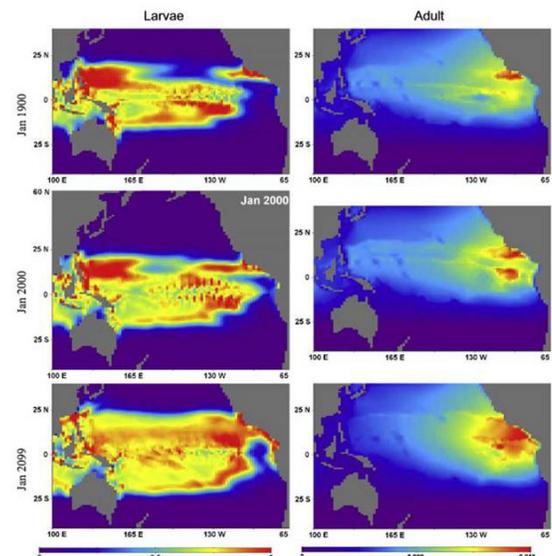


Climate Change May Increase US Pacific Remote Island Tuna Biomass

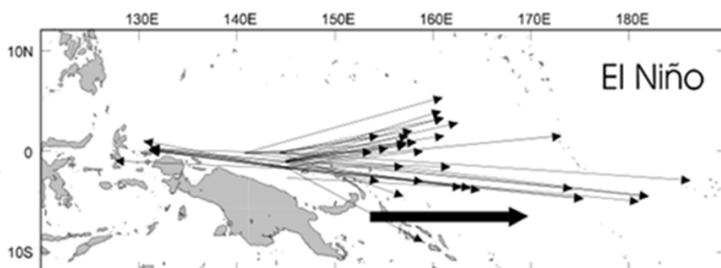
Climate change will shift bigeye tuna populations eastward, increasing Hawaii longline reliance on the Pacific Remote Island waters.

Climate change will double the frequency of El Nino periods. During El Nino periods, skipjack move east, increasing US purse seine reliance on US Pacific Remote Islands waters.

Predicted Shift in Bigeye Population from Climate Change



Lehody P et al. Preliminary forecasts of Pacific bigeye tuna population trends under the A2 IPCC Scenario. Prog Oceanogr 86(1-2) 302-315.



Skipjack tuna move eastward during El Niño. [Source: Lehody P et al. 1997. El Nino

Southern Oscillation in the Western Pacific. Nature. 389. 715-718.

Monument Expansion Will Squeeze US Fisheries, Increase Trade Deficit, Decrease Food Security

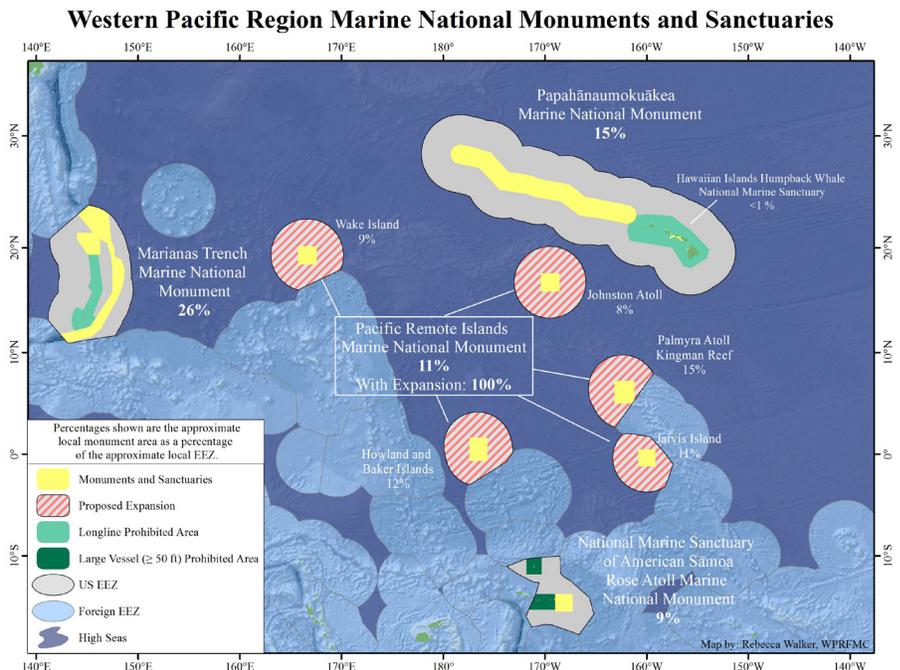
US Fisheries Are Being Squeezed Out

- Currently 17% of the US EEZ in the Pacific Islands is closed to longline and purse-seine fishing. With the proposed monument expansion, 44% of the US EEZ in the Pacific Islands will be closed to these US fisheries.

- US purse-seine fishing effort on the high seas is restricted by the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

- Fees for US purse-seine vessels to fish in the EEZs of Pacific Island countries have tripled and the number of fishing days in the EEZs are limited.

- A vessel day scheme for longline fisheries is also being contemplated.



US Seafood Trade Deficit and Food Security

- The US seafood trade deficit is estimated at \$11 billion.

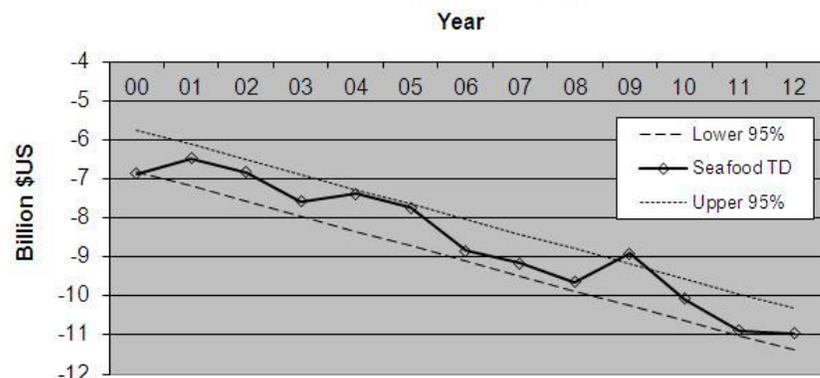
- 91% of seafood consumed in US is already from foreign sources.

- Monument expansion will reduce domestic tuna production and exacerbate the US seafood trade deficit.

- US Pacific Island seafood consumption is several times the national per capita average.

- Monument expansion will weaken US national and local food security.

U.S. Seafood Trade Deficit (billion \$US) from 2000 to 2012



The US seafood trade deficit in 2012 was valued at \$10.96 billion (US Census Bureau trade data).

[Source: Michigan Aquaculture Association]

Monument Expansion Will Increase IUU Fishing and Weaken US Influence in the Pacific

Monument Expansion Will Increase IUU Fishing

- US Coast Guard patrols the Pacific Remote Islands infrequently (about once per quarter)
- US vessels are the “eyes and ears” of USCG and report potential illegal foreign fishing
- Negative impacts to American Samoa canning industry will make US Port States Measures ineffective as foreign fleets move to other ports to offload tuna
- Largest illegal foreign vessel violation in US history caught in American Samoa port (violation occurred in the US EEZ around the Pacific Remote Islands)
- 20-30% of foreign imported fish consumed in US is estimated to be from illegal, unregulated, unreported (IUU) sources
- Percentage likely to increase from weakening US fisheries in Pacific
- China reprocessing is a major problem

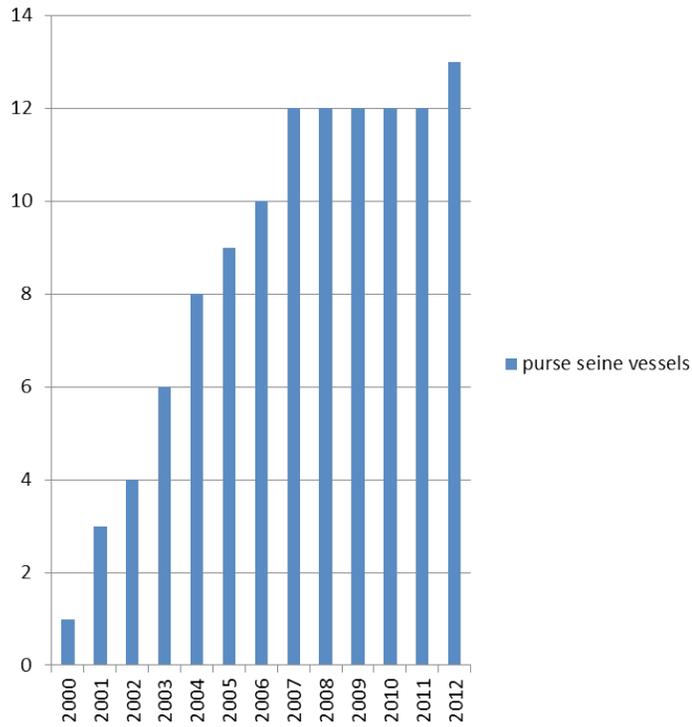
Monument Expansion Enhances China’s Control Over Oceania

- Monument expansion weakens US fisheries which weakens US influence in region
- China is aggressive player in Oceania in search of natural gas, minerals, fish, and other raw materials and subsidizes its fishing fleets
- China funds major capital improvement projects in Pacific Islands and provides other financial benefits
- Little US foreign aid to region reduces ability of US to counterbalance China

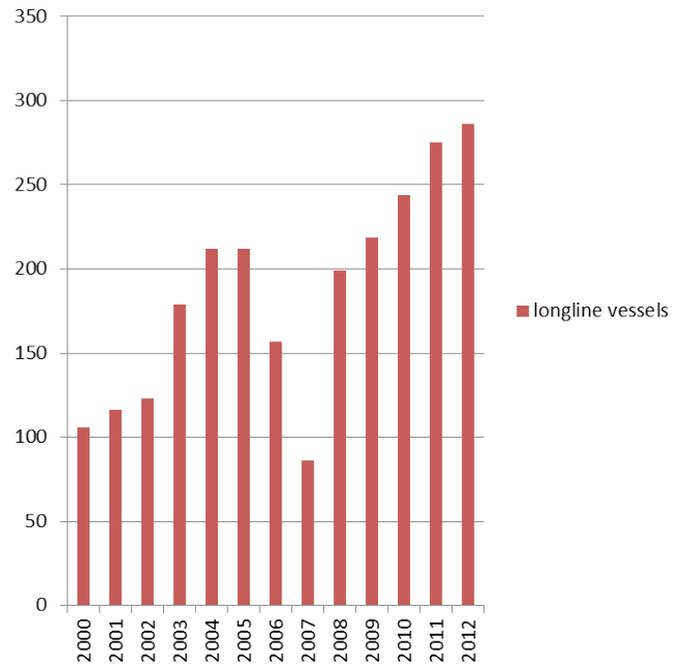
Monument Expansion Benefits the PNA Tuna Cartel

- 8 member countries are in the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) tuna cartel
- 80% of Western & Central Pacific Ocean tuna catch is from their exclusive economic zones
- 40% of global tuna supply is in their exclusive economic zones
- Supports domestic fisheries development with 100 PNA flagged purse seine vessels, operated mostly under joint venture with China, Taiwan, Korea, Philippines
- Undertaking efforts to limit access to high seas and increase fishing access fees to their EEZs (\$10K/day)

Number of Chinese purse seine vessels in WCPFC area



Number of Chinese longline vessels in WCPFC area



Source: SPC. 2013. West. Central. Pac. Tuna Fishing Yearbook. Noumea, New Caledonia.



The Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) Concerning Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest include the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

Sharks Already Protected

The Council's Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan protects pelagic sharks, with blue sharks as the main species.

The United States has no directed shark fisheries in Western Pacific.

Gear changes reduced shark mortality by 50%.

No finning allowed by the United States.

No retention of oceanic white-tip, silky or whale sharks allowed in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean by purse seine or longline fisheries.

Pelagic sharks migrate great distances.



Marine Mammals Already Protected

Council's Pelagic Fishery Ecosystem Plan and Marine Mammal Protection Act protect all marine mammals including monk seals.

Monk seals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are doing very badly in a no-fishing Marine National Monument and in the Main Hawaiian Islands are doing well with a 10,000 metric tons per year coastal fishery.

Monk seals will never be relocated to Palmyra and Johnston as all previously relocated monk seals disappeared.

Virtually no interactions (1.2 % of total) with longline vessels and marine mammals in Pacific Remote Islands.

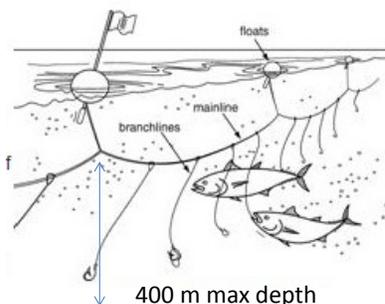
Most marine mammals observed in Pacific Remote Islands are visitors or migrants and not dependent on those islands.

Pacific Remote Island Seamounts Already Protected

Council's Pacific Remote Island Areas Fishery Ecosystem Plan provides protection for seamounts.

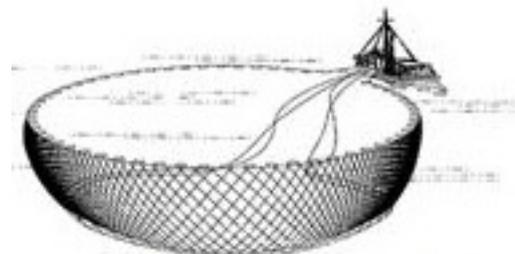
Pelagic fisheries don't impact seamounts. 242 of the 247 seamounts in the Pacific Remote Islands are deeper than the range of pelagic gear at 500 meters or deeper.

Longline



Purse Seine

200 m max depth



Monument Expansion Will Not Benefit Tuna Stocks

Large High Seas Closures Do Not Conserve Tunas

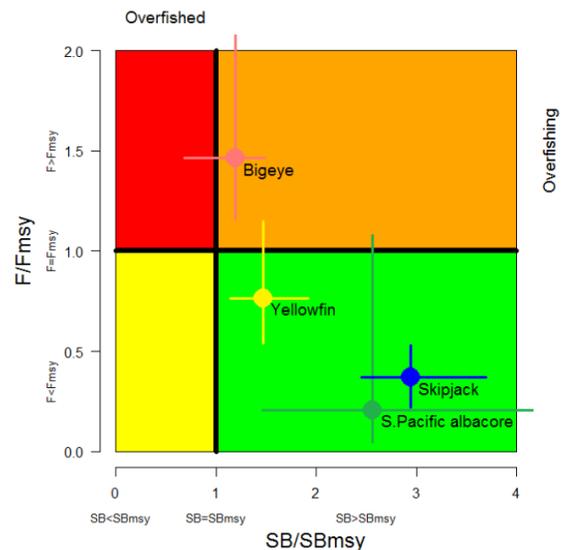
The 2010 and 2011 Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission's high seas pocket closures 1 & 2 did not work. Fishing effort moved from the high seas into adjacent EEZs. In fact total purse seine effort increased by 10% in the surrounding EEZs.



Effective Tuna Management Requires Broad-scale International Cooperation

All tuna stocks are healthy except bigeye, which is overexploited from excessive catch of juveniles by 300 purse seiners operating with 15,000-30,000 Fish Aggregation Devices in Western and Central Pacific.

Tunas move huge distances in their lifetimes and don't stay in any exclusive economic zone. Even skipjack with a 3-year life span move over 1,000 miles and spawn profusely over a wide area.

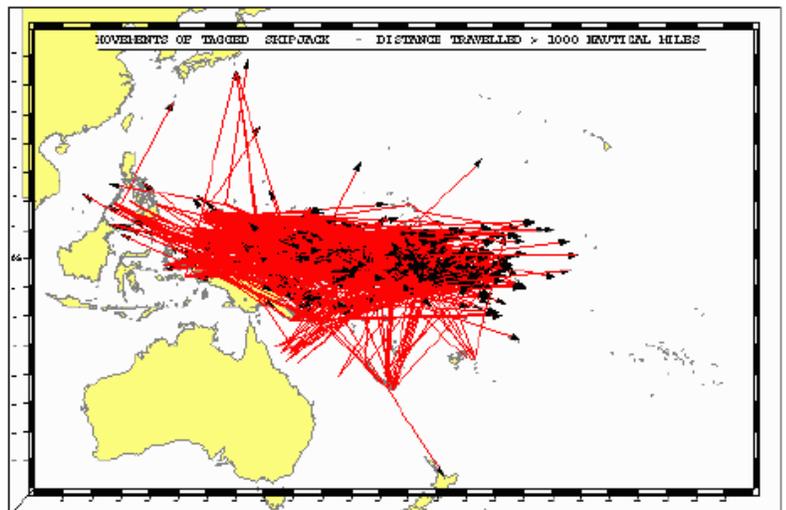


“The areas proposed are too small to impact the stock status of large tuna populations that span the Pacific Ocean. These are token closures and will have no real impact on the fishes of the ocean.”

*---Professor Ray Hilborn,
University of Washington*

“You'd need to close the entire Pacific Ocean.”

*--Professor Carl Walters,
University of British Columbia*



Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

Monument Expansion Will Not Promote Large No-Fishing Marine Preserves in the Pacific

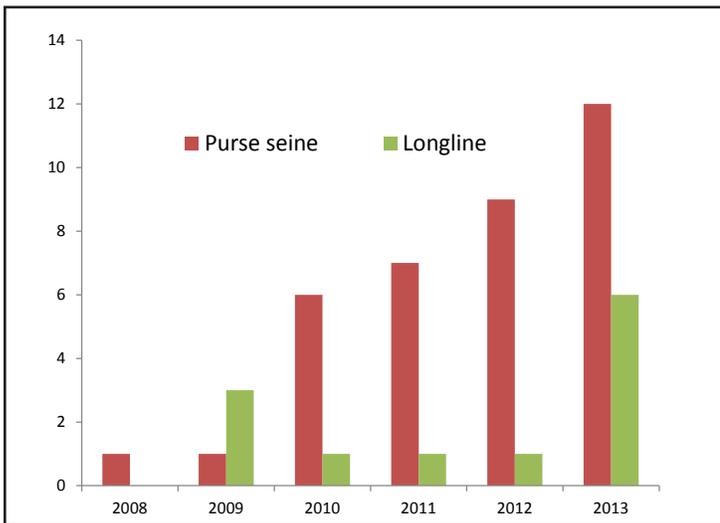
We believe that Kiribati has no intention of closing all fishing in its EEZ around the Phoenix Islands.

Value of fisheries in 2010 to Kiribati was about \$130 million or 80% of Gross Domestic Product.

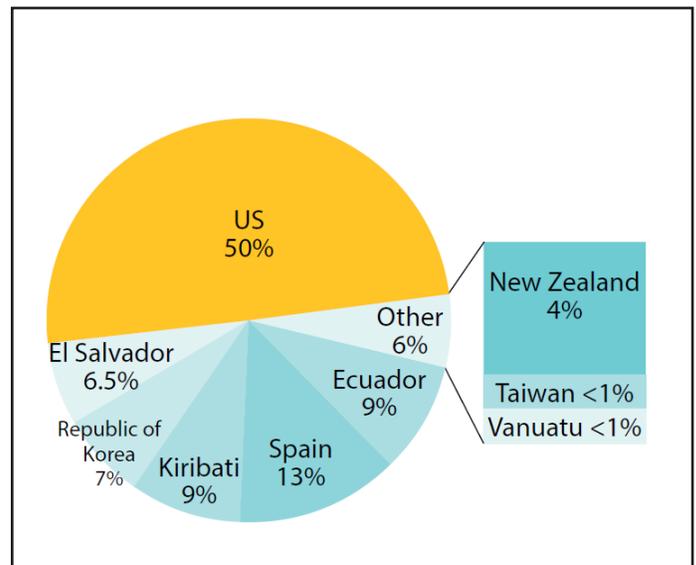
Value of foreign vessel access fees ranges from \$30-\$40 million or 18-30% of Gross Domestic Product.

Kiribati continues to license foreign purse seiners (195) and longliners (256) to fish in its EEZ including the Phoenix Islands.

No country this dependent on fishing will close off entirely a major part of its EEZ to fishing. Not even Palau, where fishing is second biggest earner after tourism.

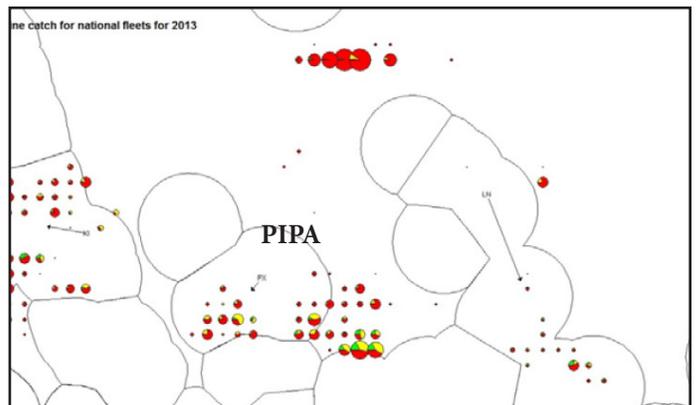
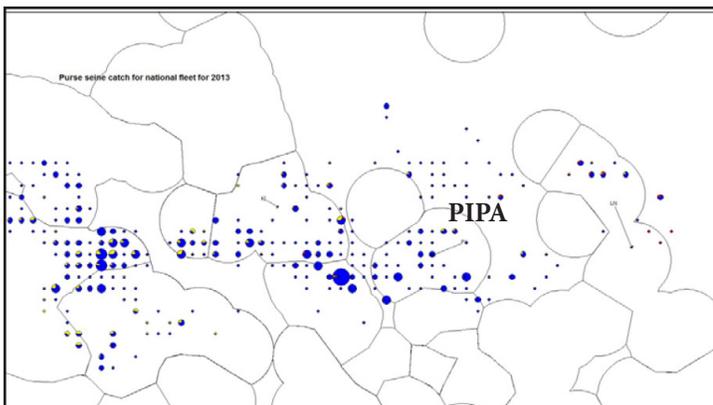


Kiribati Expanding Domestic Fishing Fleet



Purse seine fleets fishing in Phoenix Islands in 2013 = 76,000 t or 25% of Kiribati total.

[Source: Campbell B and Q Hanich. 2014. Fish for the Future: Fisheries Development and Food Security for Kiribati in an Era of Global Climate Change. WorldFish, Penang, Malaysia. Project Report 2014-47. p11.]



Kiribati Vessels Fish in the Phoenix Islands Protected Area.

(Left) Purse seine fishing in Pacific Islands Protected Area (PIPA). (Right) Longline fishing in PIPA.

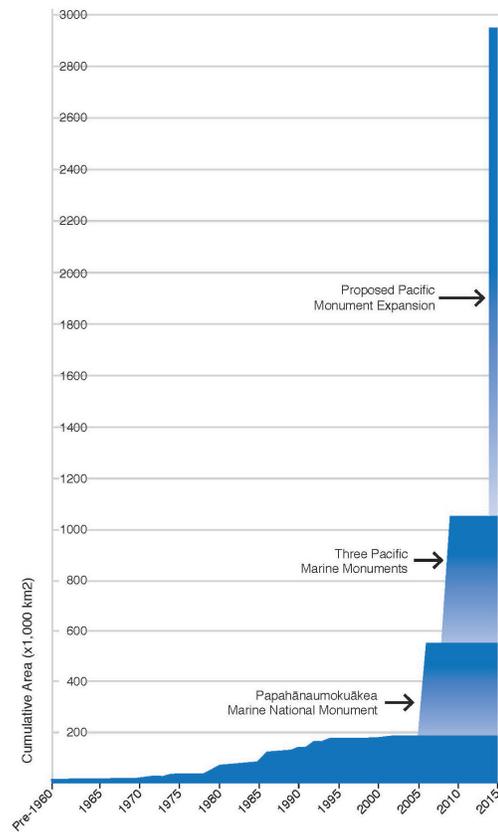
[Source: Kiribati: Part 1 Annual Report to WCPFC 2014.]

A Better, Fairer Ocean Legacy for the US Pacific Islands Allows Sustainable Fishing of a Renewable Resource

“Since 2006, unilateral presidential actions have taken the Northwest Hawaiian Islands (Papahānaumokuākea MNM), the northernmost submerged lands surrounding Uracas, Maug and Asuncion Islands in the Marianas archipelago (Marianas Trench MNM), and the only atoll in the Samoan archipelago (Rose Atoll MNM) from the very island communities that have been sustainably managing these resources for the past thousand years or so. Today, we must obtain permission from the federal monument management authorities if we wish to visit our ancestral waters. ... We believe the Western Pacific has given enough of our ocean resources for environmental legacies. We implore you to allow us to continue managing our fishery resources under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.”

---CNMI Mayors of Saipan, Northern Islands, Rota, and Tinian & Aguiguan

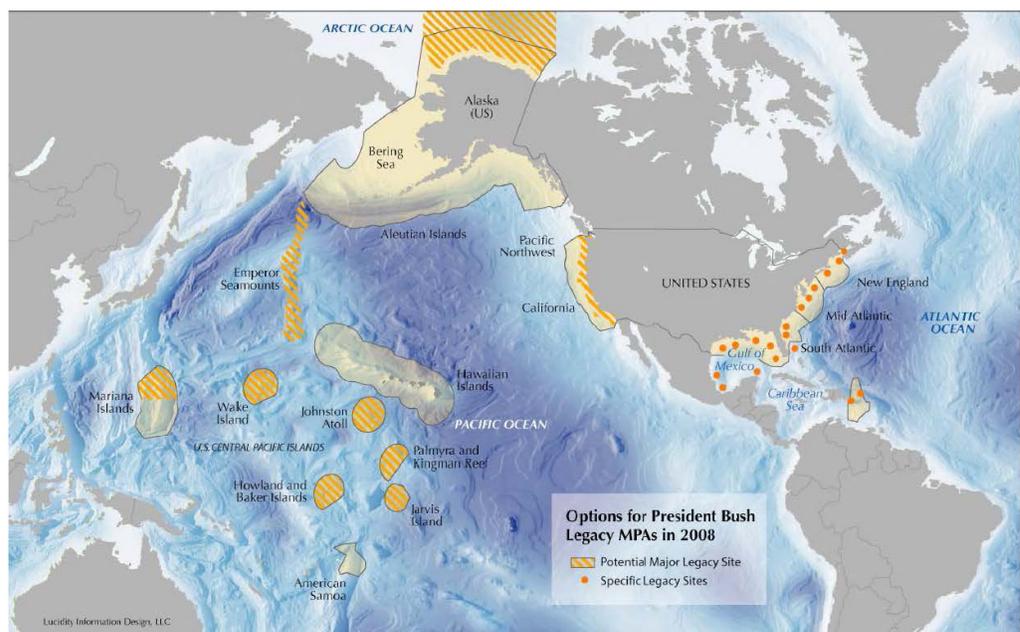
Growth in area of MPAs (in the United States), 1960-2015



[Source: “Conserving our Oceans One Place at a Time.”

marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov]

Map presented by Pew Environment Group during its campaign to establish a Blue Legacy for President Bush. Only the proposed monuments in the US Pacific Islands have been proclaimed.



Commonly Used Acronyms

CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands	NS	National Standard (Magnuson-Stevens Act)
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone	NWHI	Northwestern Hawaiian Islands
EPO	Eastern Pacific Ocean	PIC	Pacific Island Country
ESA	Endangered Species Act	PIPA	Phoenix Islands Protected Area
ETP	Eastern Tropical Pacific	PNA	Parties to the Nauru Agreement
ETPO	Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean	PNG	Papua New Guinea
FAD	Fish Aggregating Device	PRIA	Pacific Remote Island Area
FEP	Fishery Ecosystem Plan	PS	Purse Seine
FKW	False Killer Whale	RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organization
FMP	Fishery Management Plan	SPTT	South Pacific Tuna Treaty
HMS	Highly Migratory Species	SST	Sea Surface Temperature
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission	TRT	Take Reduction Team
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature	UBC	University of British Columbia
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (Fishing)	USCG	United States Coast Guard
KI	Kiribati	UW	University of Washington
LL	Longline	VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
MHI	Main Hawaiian Islands	WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act	WCPO	Western and Central Pacific Ocean
MNM	Marine National Monument	WPRFMC	Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
MSA	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act	WTP	West Tropical Pacific
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service		





**WESTERN PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERY
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400
Honolulu, HI 96813
www.wpcouncil.org

Telephone: (808) 522-8220
Fax: (808) 522-8226
info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov

CHAIR

Arnold Palacios

VICE CHAIRS

Michael Duenas - Guam

Edwin Ebisui Jr. - Hawaii

Richard Seman - Northern Mariana Islands

William Sword - American Samoa

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kitty M. Simonds



PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Sylvia Spalding (808) 383-1069 or Sylvia.Spalding@noaa.gov
For Immediate Release

At White House, Pacific Island Delegation Warns that the President's Proposed Marine Monument Expansion Will Fail American Fishermen

At an hour-long West Wing meeting yesterday, fisheries managers and commercial fishing industry representatives from the U.S. Pacific Islands spoke with Counselor to the President John Podesta and senior officials from the White House Council on Environmental Quality to express concerns regarding the President's proposed expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, which they contend will harm U.S. fishermen in the region without benefitting the surrounding environment.

HONOLULU (WPRFMC) – September 10, 2014 – A delegation from the U.S. Pacific islands, including fisheries managers and commercial fishing industry representatives, met yesterday with the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), including Counselor to the President John Podesta. The group conveyed its concerns for an Executive proposal that would bar fishermen from nearly 700,000 miles of vitally historic fishing grounds.

The delegation from the Pacific Islands included leaders from Hawai'i, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) and the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC). They expressed their opposition to President Obama's proposal to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM). Arnold Palacios, CNMI Secretary of the Department of Lands and Natural Resources and WPRFMC chair, described the meeting as "a frank discussion," at which the delegation from the Western Pacific shared "concerns that the current proposal is destined to fail our fishermen and environment." According to the WPRFMC and others at the meeting, the proposed Monument expansion would unfairly penalize the U.S. Pacific Islands and American fishermen and fail at its conservation objectives.

The meeting was an important opportunity for Executive officials to hear firsthand about these issues. In addition to Mr. Podesta, Acting Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality Michael Boots, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Daniel Ashe, and Senior Advisor to the Undersecretary of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Dr. Christine Blackburn were in attendance, among other senior officials.

According to the WPRFMC, the Administration overlooked key local stakeholders and regional fishery managers in the original planning of the proposal, which in turn produced a plan that neglects the needs and concerns of the region and its vitally important fishing industry.

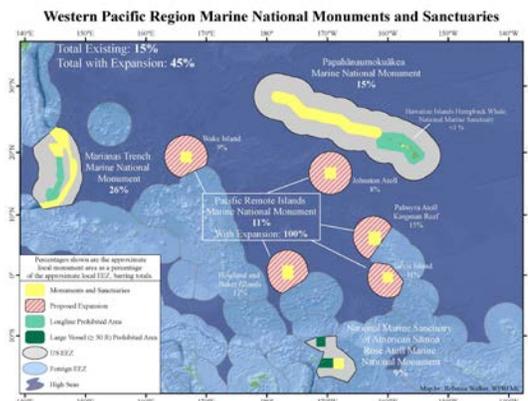
Sean Martin, of the Hawai'i Longline Association, remarked that "this attempt at crafting an environmental legacy for our nation will ultimately prove to accomplish the opposite by disenfranchising our own fishermen and outsourcing domestic seafood demand to nations whose standards for environmental protections pale in comparison to our own."

Opposition to the proposed Monument expansion centers around arguments that it disregards already effective marine protections, unfairly harms hard working American fishermen, and outsources domestic seafood demand to nations with poor records of environmental stewardship.

Kitty Simonds, Executive Director of the WPRFMC, explained, "Our current management systems are a global guide and a living legacy for responsible resource management. Our regulations are the strictest in the world."

Added to that, say representatives from the WPRFMC, is the unfortunate reality that the size of an expanded Monument

--- more ---



(Above) Map illustrating the vast expanse of ocean that would be off limits to fishermen with the proposed Monument expansion.

would be too large to enforce, likely leading to exploitation of the Monument by foreign competitors for illegal fishing.

Currently, 91 percent of seafood consumed in the United States is imported, with up to one-third potentially sourced from illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing.

The delegates from the U.S. Pacific Islands also say that the marine species for which protections are sought are highly migratory and will not gain protections from an expanded PRIMNM. For our fishermen, they argue, the expansion will mean substantial cost increases, both in terms of fuel to travel further out to sea and for entry to other nations' fishing grounds, for which our fishermen are required to pay large fees. They noted that fishing access to the high seas is also restricted by international fishery management organizations, to which the United States is a party. Representatives from the WPRFMC further explained that U.S. Pacific Island fishermen are also being squeezed out of U.S. waters by other existing marine national monuments, national marine sanctuaries, large fishing vessel exclusion zones and no-access military areas.

Claire Poumele, Director of the American Samoa Port Authority and a WPRFMC member, said the Monument expansion would have catastrophic consequences to the territory's tuna canning operations, which employs one-third of the population.

But at the meeting, government officials reaffirmed their support for the Monument's expansion, however, they did not explain their rationale or expound upon any supporting facts. Mr. Podesta expressed his opinion that large marine protected areas are valuable to the nation's conservation objectives.

The WPRFMC is a regional fishery management council established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act in 1976. The Council has successfully implemented innovations in fisheries management and conservation for 35 years, including ecosystem-based fishery management plans and vessel monitoring systems. WPRFMC emphasizes public participation and the involvement of local communities in science-based fisheries management.

Contact: Sylvia Spalding
Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council
+1 (808) 383-1069
Sylvia.Spalding@noaa.gov

To view attachments, go to:

http://www.wpcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/WPRFMC_CEQ-presentation.pdf

<http://www.wpcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PRIMNM-CEQ-Meeting-Complete-Media-Package.pdf>



WESTERN
PACIFIC
REGIONAL
FISHERY
MANAGEMENT
COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Sylvia Spalding (808) 522-5341 or Sylvia.Spalding@noaa.gov
For Immediate Release

Western Pacific Fishery Management Council Responds to the President's Pacific Monument Expansion Decision

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) acknowledges that the President's amended Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) expansion plan reduces the economic toll the original plan would have taken on sustainable US Pacific Island fisheries. The announcement of the final plan comes after months of the WPRFMC expressing serious concern for a sudden, unilateral proposal from the White House to expand the monument.

The WPRFMC has been informed by the White House by phone today that the monument will now extend to 200 miles around Johnston Atoll, Jarvis Island and Wake Island, but the existing 50-mile PRIMNM boundary will remain around Howland and Baker Islands and Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef.

HONOLULU (WPRFMC) – September 24, 2014 – A plan announced in June to vastly expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) – and in turn prohibit commercial fishing therein – has been amended to better accommodate economically vital fishing industries for Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Islands. Following a West Wing meeting joining representatives of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC) and the Hawaii longline fishing industry with Counselor to the President John Podesta and White House Council on Environmental Quality Acting Chair Mike Boots, and in the wake of public criticism and media attention, the White House announced today a revised plan for the President's expansion of the PRIMNM.

In the months since the June 17 announcement to expand the size of the PRIMNM tenfold, the WPRFMC; the governors of American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI); the American Samoa and CNMI legislatures; US longline and purse-seine fishermen; tuna cannery representatives; and marine science experts have expressed deep concerns regarding the shortcomings of the proposed expansion. According to those speaking out in opposition, the initial plan for expansion disregarded essential local fishing industries and provided negligible gains for conservation. The revised plan will expand the monument to include the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) surrounding Johnston Atoll, Jarvis Island and Wake Island, but will not expand the existing 50-mile prohibitions on fishing around Howland and Baker Islands and Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef.

The WPRFMC expresses appreciation to President Obama for considering the economic and cultural concerns of American citizens, particularly in Hawaii and American Samoa, who will be most affected by the expansion.

According to the WPRFMC, these revisions will allow U.S. fishermen to continue their operations within traditional fishing grounds under existing regulations in 35 percent of the US

--- more ---

Fishery Council Responds to Monument Expansion 2-2-2-2

EEZ around the US Pacific Remote Islands, but will remove them completely in 65 percent of the US EEZ around these islands. “Our US Pacific Island fishermen already comply with the strictest regulations in the world,” said Kitty Simonds, WPRFMC executive director.

She added, “We appreciate the White House’s compromise on a monument expansion that could have devastated our region’s fisheries and communities without notable environmental benefits. We now look to see how this declaration will be achieved in practice, beyond paper and politics, and hope that the US Coast Guard will use additional enforcement funds to patrol US waters as a first priority.”

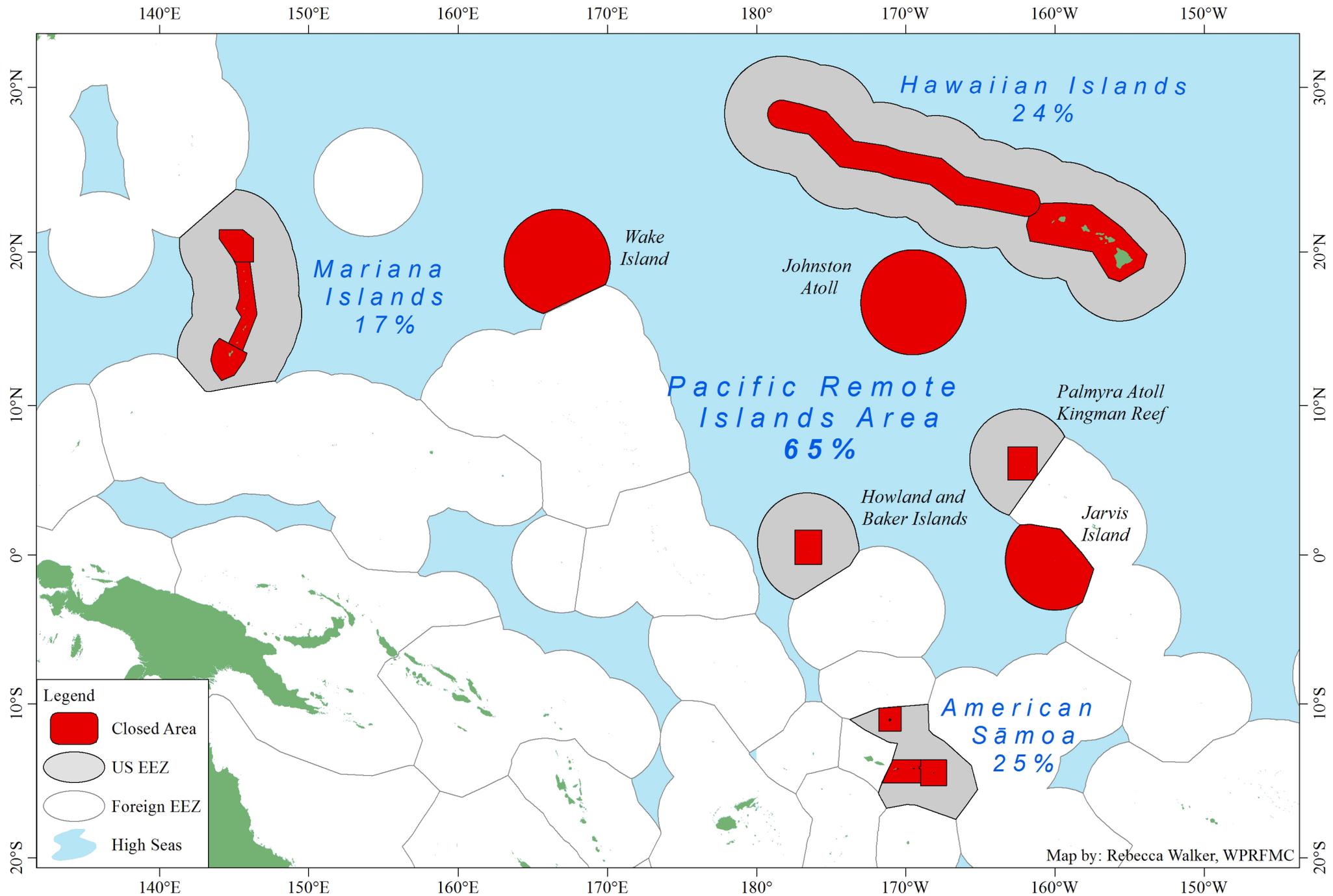
Still, fishing industry representatives have spoken publicly of their concerns for the lack of an environmental and public review process, proper representation, and transparency in the decision-making affecting monument expansion.

According to the WPRFMC, regional experts and industry representatives were not consulted in advance of the initial announcement and only minimally during the process leading up to today’s announcement. Simonds remarked that “The US Pacific Islands came together as a united regional voice on this issue and that speaks to the anxiety at the prospect of an immense expansion of a Presidential monument with little-to-no local consultation. All of the marine national monuments are in the US Pacific Islands. We account for about 76 percent of the marine protected areas (MPAs) in the United States and virtually all of the nation’s no-take MPAs. Congress has curtailed further use of Presidential monument proclamation authority in Alaska and Wyoming, and Congress should similarly bar further national marine monument proclamations in Hawaii and the US territories of American Samoa, CNMI, Guam and the US Pacific Remote Islands.”

Simonds said that the WPRFMC anticipates working with the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop, under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the revised fishing regulations for the expanded monument, as it has for the other marine national monuments.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council was established by Congress to manage fisheries in offshore waters around Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the US Pacific remote island areas. For more information, visit www.wpcouncil.org, email info.wpcouncil@noaa.gov, phone (808) 522-8220 or fax (808) 522-8226.

U.S. EEZ Closed to U.S. Commercial Fishing Vessels



NEWS

NATIONAL

CONCERT

PACIFIC

US amends marine reserve plan to accommodate fishing industries

Updated at 6:42 am on 27 September 2014



The US President has amended his Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument to accommodate economically vital fishing industries for Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Islands.

Barack Obama announced in June that the Monument would be expanded into the largest marine reserve in the world and would be off limits to commercial fishing and energy exploration.

He has now revised the plan which will expand the monument to include the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones surrounding Johnston Atoll, Jarvis Island and Wake Island.

He signed the proclamation today.

The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council, who led the charge opposing the original plan, has welcomed the move.

It says it's pleased Mr Obama considered the economic and cultural concerns of American citizens, particularly in Hawaii and American Samoa, which would have been most affected by the expansion.

A senior scientist with the Council, Paul Dalzell, says he is pleased the President listened to what people had to say.

"They've actually paid attention that we do regard these fishing grounds as being potentially very valuable and that their lost would incur harm on our long line purse-seine fishery



Next story in Pacific: [Bougainville landowners say NGO should be ashamed](#)

Copyright © 2014, Radio New Zealand

PACIFIC

[Drug misuse helps spread TB in PNG](#)

The Seattle Times

Winner of Nine Pulitzer Prizes

Opinion

Originally published Friday, November 14, 2014 at 4:43 PM

Guest: Pacific Island fishing culture is under attack

When it comes to commercial fishing, President Obama needs to heed the voices from his home state and adjacent territories, write guest columnists Edwin Ebisui Jr. and Kitty Simonds.

By Edwin Ebisui Jr. and Kitty Simonds

Special to The Times



COMMERCIAL fishing is a vital industry in the western Pacific Ocean and a cornerstone of the economies of Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific territories. But over the years, area fishermen have been repeatedly constrained by federal efforts that have created vast new marine preserves that prohibit fishing.

The latest, an expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM), is the largest such preserve in the world. While touted as a major step forward for conservation, it will instead likely lead to increased costs and an increased reliance on imported seafood, already 90 percent of the U.S. market. These are concerns that the federal government needs to more effectively consider in future marine conservation policy.

President Obama's initial expansion proposal would have excluded commercial fishermen from nearly 782,000 square miles of U.S. waters around seven U.S. islands and atolls. Practically, this would require local fisheries to rely increasingly on the high seas and foreign fishing grounds, which, among other effects, would drastically alter and impede traditional Pacific Island fishing culture.

The president's final action, announced on Sept. 25, formally proclaimed 490,000 square miles of

these waters as part of the PRIMNM. This modification reduced, but did not remove, the harm to our fishermen and communities who depend on these waters for their livelihoods and sustenance and to supply legal, reported and regulated seafood to U.S. consumers.

It can be hard for the concerns of Pacific Island communities to reach Washington, D.C. Six thousand miles separate the Oval Office from the newly expanded monument, near Hawaii and the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Our islands sit far from both the mainland and the mainstream media. Other than Hawaii, our communities are represented in Congress by only nonvoting delegates, and we are recognized internationally as "small island

developing states.” In addition to economic issues, many in the region voiced concern over whether the monument would be ecologically effective.

The pre-existing monument already protected critical shallow reef habitats. The species that are nominally protected in the expanded monument waters — 50 to 200 miles offshore — are highly migratory, meaning they’ll move freely within and beyond these new boundaries. These U.S. waters were already subject to the strictest management standards in the world, allowing only a limited number of highly regulated and monitored U.S. longline and purse-seine fishermen to operate within them.

In aspiring to the bragging rights of having the largest marine protected area in the world, PRIMNM proponents actually detract from our nation’s attempts to promote environmental conservation and fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by putting our law-abiding U.S. fishermen at a disadvantage in the international arena.

U.S. Pacific Island fishermen have fished these waters for centuries. But over the last decade, they’ve been kicked out of more and more of these waters. In fact, all of America’s marine national monuments are in the U.S. Pacific Islands, accounting for about 76 percent of U.S. marine protected areas. If any more U.S. Pacific Island waters become subject to presidential mandates, the marine-based traditions and economies of those of us who live in these remote, underrepresented islands will crumble.

Edwin Ebisui Jr. is a commercial fisherman in Hawaii and the acting chairman of the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council. Kitty Simonds is the council’s executive director.



Want unlimited access to seattletimes.com? Subscribe now!