

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument: A Commitment To Good Stewardship Of Our Natural Resources

Today, President Bush Signed A Proclamation That Will Create The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument. This national monument will enable nearly 140,000 square miles of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands to receive our Nation's highest form of marine environmental protection. It honors our commitment to be good stewards of America's natural resources, shows what cooperative conservation can accomplish, and creates a new opportunity for ocean education and research for decades to come. The national monument will:

- Preserve access for Native Hawaiian cultural activities;
- Provide for carefully regulated educational and scientific activities;
- Enhance visitation in a special area around Midway Island;
- Prohibit unauthorized access to the monument;
- Phase out commercial fishing over a five-year period; and
- Ban other types of resource extraction and dumping of waste.

This Marine National Monument Is The Largest Single Area Dedicated To Conservation In The History Of Our Country And The Largest Protected Marine Area In The World. It is more than 100 times larger than Yosemite National Park, larger than 46 of our 50 states, and more than seven times larger than all our National Marine Sanctuaries combined.

The New Monument Fulfills A Legacy Of Conservation First Begun By President Theodore Roosevelt. In 2004, the Administration released an Ocean Action Plan to promote an ethic of responsible use and stewardship of our oceans and coastal resources. By establishing this new national monument, we are implementing an important part of our plan.

1. The New National Monument Will Honor Our Commitment To Be Good Stewards Of America's Natural Resources

Our Duty Is To Use The Land And Seas Wisely. Americans are united in the belief that we must preserve our natural heritage and safeguard the environment around us for future generations. This belief is affirmed in our laws, and today this commitment was reaffirmed once again.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Are A Beautiful And Special Place. The ten islands and atolls stretch over nearly 1,400 miles – the distance from Chicago to Miami.

➤ **The Undersea Forests And Mountain Ranges Of The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Comprise The Largest Remote Reef System In The World.** In the tropical waters surrounding this archipelago, there are more than 4,500 square miles of coral-reef habitat thriving under the surface. The region holds the largest, healthiest, and most untouched coral-reef system in the United States.

➤ **The Archipelago Is Home To More Than 7,000 Marine Species – A Quarter Of Which Are Found Nowhere Else On Earth.** The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are also the primary home for the nearly 1,400 surviving Hawaiian Monk Seals – virtually the entire population of this critically endangered species. They are also the breeding grounds for approximately 90 percent of the threatened Hawaiian Islands Green Sea Turtle population.

This National Monument Will Have Strong Regulations And New Tools To Aid Enforcement In The Marine Area. The monument will preserve access for native Hawaiian cultural activities. Within the boundaries of the monument, we will prohibit unauthorized passage of ships, unauthorized recreational or commercial activity, and any extraction of coral, wildlife, minerals, and other resources, or dumping of waste.

➤ **Over A Five-Year Period, We Will Phase Out Commercial Fishing Within The Monument.** We are encouraged that private organizations are prepared to work on a financial arrangement with the remaining commercial fishermen to provide for a smooth transition away from fishing in the national monument.

2. The New National Monument Shows What Cooperative Conservation Can Accomplish

The Administration Believes Cooperative Conservation Is The Best Way To Protect The Environment We All Share. This means we must focus on the needs of States, respect the unique knowledge of local authorities, and welcome the help of private groups and volunteers. Through cooperative conservation, we are moving away from the old environmental debates that pit one group against another and toward a system that brings citizens and every level of government together to get results.

➤ **In The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, The State Of Hawaii Has Been A Valued Partner Throughout A Five-Year Process That Focused On The Needs Of Hawaii And Honored Its Heritage.** Since 2002, there have been over 100 meetings and working group sessions open to the public – including 22 formal public hearings – generating over 52,000 comments. President Bush established the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument with overwhelming consensus from the public and strong agreement from Governor Lingle and State officials.

➤ **The Administration Has Worked With Governor Lingle, State Officials, And Native Hawaiian Leaders To Ensure The Monument Will Protect The Cultural And Historical Heritage Of These Islands.** The islands are dotted with archaeological treasures and traditional sites of worship. This monument will protect the cultural ties that Native Hawaiians have to these lands and waters, and officials will consult with native Hawaiian leaders to give this monument a native Hawaiian name.

➤ **As Part Of This Proclamation, The Department Of The Interior And The Department Of Commerce Will Work With The State Of Hawaii And The Public To Develop A Plan To Manage The Monument.** This proclamation will also charge NOAA to use its expertise to oversee the new marine areas, and the Fish and Wildlife Service to apply their skills to the wildlife refuge areas.

➤ **In The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, Volunteers Play An Important Role.** Through a major Federal-State partnership, volunteer divers work together to remove nets and gear that have been abandoned by fishermen. In one year alone, divers removed more than 120 tons of this derelict fishing gear.

• **By Working Together, Government And Volunteers Are Making Our Oceans Safer For Marine Life – And Preserving Our Seas And Coastlines For Future Generations.** To fight the destructive effects of abandoned nets and other debris, the President's Ocean Action Plan directed the Coast Guard, EPA, NOAA, the State Department, and the Interior Department to coordinate their efforts to improve how the Federal government tracks, prevents, and cleans up marine waste.

The Administration Is Working To End Over-Fishing.

➤ **The President's Ocean Action Plan Calls On Congress To Reauthorize The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation And Management Act.** Under the President's plan, this act would provide enhanced authority to work with regional fish councils to build an improved, market-based system to restore our fisheries.

➤ **Congress Should Also Move Forward With The Administration's Proposal To Build A Well-Managed System Of Offshore Aquaculture.** Aquaculture, or "fish farming," uses pens in the open ocean to feed and grow shrimp, shellfish, and many other types of fish. These farmed fish can provide a healthy source of food and reduce pressure on our ocean ecosystem.

➤ **The Administration Is Committed To Working More Closely With Our Nation's Recreational And Sport-Fishing Communities.** These communities are important allies in our conservation efforts. We want to ensure these citizen-conservationists can continue to access, protect, and enjoy our waters.

The National Monument Will Have A Special-Access Area Around Midway Island, So More Americans Can Visit And Honor The Memory Of Those Who Gave Their Lives So Our Nation Might Live In Freedom. Near the northern edge of the Northwestern Hawaiian islands lies Midway Island, the site of one of the most decisive battles of World War II. On this atoll, there is a memorial to the sacrifice and valor of those who fought in the Pacific theatre during World War II.

3. The New National Monument Creates A New Opportunity For Ocean Education And Research For Decades To Come

One Of The Key Priorities Of The President's Ocean Action Plan Is Promoting Ocean Research And Education. Ninety-five percent of our planet's oceans have yet to be explored. We are just beginning to appreciate what the seas have to offer humanity. The waters of this new national monument will be a living laboratory that offers new opportunities to discover new life, helps us better manage our ocean ecosystems, and allows us to pursue advances in science.

➤ **The Ocean Is A Source Of Technological Discovery.** Researchers are discovering thousands of new, potentially useful compounds in the ocean. Marine life has given researchers new bio-chemicals that help battle viruses and fight several different kinds of cancer. Since 1983,

U.S. marine biotechnology research has produced more than 170 U.S. patents.

The Designation Of The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument Will Protect Our Natural Wealth For The Generations That Follow And Lay The Foundation For Even Greater Discoveries And Conservation To Come.