PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT PRESS RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—30 July 2007

Expedition to Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Yields Groundbreaking Data, Deep-Sea Photographs

Researchers returned from a three-week expedition to the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands with photos of rarely explored deep-sea environments and new data on predator movement patterns that will help guide management of the monument.

Scientists from NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program and the University of Hawaii's Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) aboard the NOAA Ship *Hi`ialakai* conducted research on coral health, apex predator movement patterns, deep-sea habitat, and other studies that contribute to our understanding of the monument and allow marine managers to make well-informed decisions. The cruise took the scientists as far as Kure Atoll, 1,200 miles from Honolulu and the most northerly reef of the Hawaiian Archipelago.

The cruise was the first of three that will take place through October 2007. During the mission, University of Hawaii scientists used a time-lapse camera to document deep-sea habitats that have never before been photographed. Photos from depths of 500-4,000 meters included those of 15-foot-long sleeper sharks, a species that is normally found in shallow water off Alaska and deep water off Japan and southern California, and of an extremely rare species of hagfish that had not been previously photographed in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

"The research conducted on this cruise will help monument managers to better understand the important ecosystems that make up the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands' environments," said Randy Kosaki, sanctuary program research coordinator for the monument, who served as chief scientist on the cruise.

HIMB scientists also placed acoustic transmitter tags in large predatory fishes such as tiger sharks, ulua (jacks) and Hawaiian grouper. Underwater receivers placed around the monument and the main Hawaiian Islands record data broadcast by the tags, providing insight into these animals' range and behavioral patterns that may be important to their protection.

- More -

PLEASE CONTACT

Keeley Belva
NOAA
808.294.0932

Barbara Maxfield
USFWS
808.792.9531

Kerry Irish
State–DLNR
808.396.2660
ext. 247

A team of scientists working on habitat characterization was able to survey many monument habitats — including the sheltered inner lagoon at Pearl and Hermes Atoll — that had not previously been surveyed in detail. Other scientists on the expedition were able to obtain DNA from reef fish and invertebrates to examine the genetic connections between populations across the Hawaiian Archipelago.

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is managed jointly by three co-trustees — the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior and the State of Hawai‘i — and represents a cooperative conservation approach to protecting the entire ecosystem. The monument area includes the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge/Battle of Midway National Memorial, the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, the Hawai‘i State Seabird Sanctuary at Kure Atoll, and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands State Marine Refuge.

Updates from the cruise can be found at www.hawaiiatolls.org. For additional information on the monument, please visit www.hawaiireef.noaa.gov or www.fws.gov/pacificislands.

# # #