

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA



For Immediate Release

March 19, 2008

Hawai‘i’s Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Considered for Initial Nomination to World Heritage List

Once a little-known area that received scant attention from even Hawai‘i residents, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are now being recognized for their significant natural and cultural resources on a national and international scale. The National Park Service, on behalf of the United States, today announced its proposal to nominate Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument as one of two initial U.S. nominations to the World Heritage List. The notice opens a 15-day public comment period regarding the proposal to nominate this site.

“We are honored to be considered as one of the first sites to be nominated for World Heritage status by the United States in more than 15 years,” said Athline Clark, State Superintendent for the Monument. “We hope our many supporters will take the time to encourage the National Park Service to nominate Papahānaumokuākea.”

On January 24, the Secretary of the Interior announced a new U.S. World Heritage Tentative List, the first new list since 1982. The 14 U.S. sites included on the list are now eligible to be considered for nomination by the United States to the UNESCO World Heritage List, which recognizes the most significant cultural and natural treasures on the planet. These sites can be considered for formal nomination over the next 10 years.

Today’s action would allow the development of two nominations – for Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and Mount Vernon, Virginia – over the coming months. They would be formally submitted to the World Heritage Center by January 30, 2009. The World Heritage Committee would consider the nominations no earlier than the summer of 2010.

Papahānaumokuākea is the only site on the Tentative List nominated for both its cultural and natural resources. Native Hawaiians view the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as an integral part of the archipelago and as a deeply spiritual location. Physical remnants of wahi kūpuna (ancestral places), and oral and written accounts provide evidence of the various past uses of the islands and surrounding ocean by Native Hawaiians both as a home and a place of worship.



For more information, please contact:

Deborah Ward, Hawai‘i DLNR 587 0320

Athline Clark, Hawai‘i DLNR 587 0099

The Monument contains one of the world's most significant marine and terrestrial ecosystems, representing a major stage of the earth's evolutionary history, an outstanding example of significant on-going geological processes, and significant habitats where rare and endangered plant and animal species still survive. It is home to more than 7,000 marine species, a quarter of which are found nowhere else on Earth, and includes nearly pristine coral reefs, the largest nesting albatross colony in the world, and the primary habitat for critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals and threatened green turtles.

Comments on whether to nominate any of the properties on the new Tentative List, including Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and Mount Vernon, will be accepted by the National Park Service until March 28. Comments should address the qualifications of the properties proposed for nomination. Comments should be mailed to Jonathan Putnam, Office of International Affairs, National Park Service, 1201 Eye Street, NW (0050), Washington, D.C. 20005 or electronically mailed to jonathan_putnam@nps.gov.

World Heritage Sites are designated under the World Heritage Convention. The United States was the prime architect of the Convention, an international treaty for the preservation of natural and cultural heritage sites of global significance proposed by President Richard M. Nixon in 1972, and was the first nation to ratify it. Currently, 851 sites have been designated in 140 of the 184 signatory countries, including 20 World Heritage sites within the United States. Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is the only World Heritage site within Hawai'i and was designated in 1987.

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, Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge/Battle of Midway National Memorial, Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Kure Atoll Wildlife Sanctuary, and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands State Marine Refuge.

As part of the global campaign to raise awareness about the value and importance of the coral reefs and threats to their sustainability, 2008 has been dedicated as the International Year of the Reef. Join Papahānaumokuākea in this worldwide celebration and learn more on how to care about your coral reefs at www.iyor-hawaii.org. For additional information on the Monument, please visit www.hawaiireef.noaa.gov or www.fws.gov/pacificislands.