

Mrs. Bush's Remarks at the Announcement of the Native Hawaiian Name for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument

Washington Place
Honolulu, Hawaii

9:52 A.M. (Local)

MRS. BUSH: Thank you very much, Governor Lingle, thank you for the -- (laughter) -- that's not even Hawaiian. (Laughter.) Thank you for the very kind introduction, and thank you for your warm welcome to your beautiful state. It seems even more beautiful today after I looked at the weather report in Washington, where we'll be going back this afternoon.

As we bask in this beautiful weather, we do want to take a moment to think about the people in Alabama and Georgia who suffered tornadoes last night, and the loss of life. And I know they're suffering, and I know that Americans everywhere are thinking about them and praying for them.



I also want to acknowledge, of course, your Lieutenant Governor, Governor Aiona. Thank you for being here. Our United States Department of Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne, thank you for joining me, and for joining me yesterday at the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. David Sampson, the Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce, thank you for joining us. Jim Connaughton, the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality, who has worked so hard at the White House, I want you all to know that, that he's been working in Washington for literally years now since we first showed "Voyage to Kure," to make sure that this day would come when we would be able to give the Northwestern Hawaiian Island Marine Monument its native name. Thank you very much, Jim, for that. Uncle Buzzy Agard and Aunt Pua, thank you very much also for joining us today.

I want to thank all the preservationists, the conservationists, the researchers, the local officials, the state senators and representatives, the cultural leaders, and the distinguished guests who are here today that have made this occasion possible. Thank you for coming to celebrate this exciting moment in the history of Hawaii and in the history of our country.

Stretching 1,200 miles west from here is the world's most remote chain of islands, the Northwestern Hawaiian Archipelago. For 28 million years, these islands have been oases of rock and sand, found where the turquoise sea meets the wide-open sky. They're home to delicate flowers and grasses. They serve as nesting grounds for 14 million birds. Thousands of aquatic species call these island waters home -- from Sea Lettuce, to Chocolate Chip Sea Cucumber, to the Bandit Angelfish, to the Convict Tang, to the Hawaiian green sea turtles.

Hawaiian sea green turtles have navigated these waters for 150 million years. Sixteen million years ago, they were joined by the playful monk seals. Today, both of these creatures are highly endangered, and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are their last refuge on earth.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are home to 7,000 marine species, a quarter of which are found nowhere else on earth. They represent some of our country's most extraordinary natural treasures, and all of us have the obligation to protect them for millennia to come.



Preservation -- of our environment, our history, and our culture -- is an issue that President Bush and I care about very deeply. In 2003, the President announced the Preserve America initiative to encourage communities to protect our natural and cultural heritage. I'd like to congratulate the people of Hawaii on their first Preserve America Community -- the Chinatown Special Historic District, right here in Honolulu -- which was dedicated last May. In June 2006, President Bush demonstrated his commitment to preserving Hawaii's natural treasures when he established the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument.

This designation safeguards more than 140,000 square miles of aquatic sanctuary -- the largest protected marine area in the world. It prohibits unauthorized shipping and the removal of marine life. And it establishes a living laboratory where researchers can learn how to protect ocean ecosystems around the globe.

The monument also reflects the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands' important role in human history. Hundreds of years before Columbus crossed the Atlantic, early Hawaiians sailed the vast expanse of the Pacific. They erected sacred shrines that remain intact today, providing a cultural link between ancient Hawaiians and their descendants. When President Bush established the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument, he assured that the atolls' cultural significance would be reflected in a native Hawaiian name.

Today, I'm delighted to announce that the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands will be named the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. (Applause.) The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument name was adopted after consultation with native Hawaiian elders, and it suggests the abundance and timelessness of life on the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Most important, the name reminds us of our responsibility to care for the archipelago.

For Aulani Wilhelm, the monument's NOAA Superintendent and a member of the native Hawaiian community, caring for the archipelago means preserving Hawaiian culture. According to traditional genealogy, the islands' marine life, land, wind, and rain are beloved ancestors. And as Aulani explains: "It's important to go back there to let our ancestors know that we haven't forgotten them."

Papahānaumokuākea also ensures that Aulani's ancestors will be honored through responsible conservation. The monument will preserve native Hawaiians' access to the islands for cultural practices, and give elders more opportunities to study the artifacts of their ancestry. Practitioners can return to the places where their predecessors worshiped hundreds of years ago. Now, their descendants will be able to follow in their footsteps.

For Cindy Waddington, a volunteer with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Midway, caring for the archipelago means protecting the millions of birds that call these islands home. Midway's ancient Hawaiian name, Pihemanu, means "the loud din of birds." After her first sleepless night courtesy of the Laysan albatross, Cindy realized that the name was well-deserved. And actually, we all realized that, too, when we slept there night before last.

Right now, the albatross, the Laysan albatross, has nested, and there are millions of little chicks everywhere. Everywhere you step you have to watch to make sure you don't step on one of these vulnerable little chicks. They have no natural predators. They nest right on the grounds. The parents, the mating pair, who mate for life, leave their baby chicks to go fish and then come back and bring them their food. And it really -- you become so protective of these little chicks, they're so vulnerable. These precious little chicks have really served to remind all of us how vulnerable life is everywhere, but especially on these sacred islands.

This year, it was such a privilege to be able to see these and to be able to spend the day yesterday there. Unfortunately, I also saw the marine debris that threatens the existence of these albatross and other animals that are there. From plastic toys to discarded computer monitors, trash is carried by currents from all over the world. Midway's beaches collect derelict fishing gear from China, medicine bottles from the mainland United States, cigarette lighters from all over the world. This debris then finds its way into the birds' stomachs, killing thousands of birds every year.

And we did, more than once, as we walked around yesterday, see the carcass of a little bird. And you could open it up and see all this plastic, because the adult albatross fish on the waters, they skim the waters for squid, and because this plastic floats, they pick it up and then feed it to their babies.

People everywhere have a responsibility to be good stewards of our environment, because the trash we throw in our neighborhood gutter can devastate rare wildlife half a world away. In the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, our government is working to keep the reefs and beaches clear of this dangerous marine debris. In 2006, NOAA picked up 21 tons of debris in the islands, and has collected more than 560 tons over the last ten years. Through a partnership between the state of Hawaii and the federal government, divers have cleared more than 120 tons of derelict fishing gear off the islands' reef.

Fish and Wildlife Service volunteers on Midway, like Cindy Waddington, incorporate beach cleanup into their conservation activities. They have "weed-pulling Fridays" to clear invasive plant species like the Verbesina, and give Dawn detergent baths to birds who have been caught in an oil slick. Cindy says that the long hours caring for the archipelago are worth it. "We're giving the islands back to the birds," she said. "The time we're investing now will make sure that the Northwest Hawaiian Islands remain the one-of-a-kind place they've always been."

For Harry Ferrier, caring for the archipelago means respecting the place where hundreds of Americans gave their lives to preserve our freedom. This former Navy man is 82 years old -- he likes to call himself an "ancient mariner" -- but Harry clearly remembers the 17-year-old who served his country in the most important naval battle in our history.

Early on the morning of June 4th, 1942, Harry's plane was one of the first to encounter the Imperial Japanese fleet at Midway. Harry had volunteered to fly in one of six Grumman torpedo planes assigned to the carrier Hornet. His was the only plane that came back -- but not before taking nine cannon hits and 47 machine-gun bullets. One of these bullets killed the gunner on Harry's plane, another wounded the pilot, and two more struck Harry.

Yet with courage and with skill, they returned their plane intact, crash landing on Midway Atoll. Harry's plane was part of the Torpedo Squadron 8 that helped American bombers move in and destroy four Japanese carriers -- winning the battle of Midway, and turning the tide in the war of the Pacific.

After the plane's successful attack and landing, which earned the pilot two Navy Crosses, it was brought to Pearl Harbor. And there it underwent battle damage assessments that led to

mechanical upgrades on the Grumman Avenger. Those upgrades saved the lives of other American aviators in the war, including a young Avenger pilot named George H.W. Bush, my father-in-law.

Even though Harry was seriously wounded at Midway, and one of only three survivors among his squadron's 48 members, he was back in service a month later. He served aboard the carrier Enterprise, fought at Guadalcanal, and retired as a Navy commander in 1970. When Harry visits Midway -- most recently with Dr. Robert Ballard, in search of sunken American and Japanese carriers -- he remembers the same white sand beaches. He remembers the din of those albatross. But mostly, Harry said, "I remember my shipmates who never came back."

To Harry, caring for the archipelago means preserving a place where Americans can "honor the sacrifices people made to win that war. It's a place to remember how important they were to our nation, and how, during one moment's time in Midway's history, they preserved timeless ideals of freedom."

Midway's military history, too, will be preserved at Papahānaumokuākea, part of the National Parks Centennial Initiative, which Secretary Kempthorne will tell us about in a minute. We'll hope to expand visitor access to Midway Island and educate millions of visitors to the Main Hawaiian islands about the war in the Pacific.

The last Hawaiian monarch to reside here at Washington Place, Queen Lili'uokalani, wrote these beautiful words in a Hawaiian national anthem. In the song, she asks God to "Grant your blessings of peace throughout these islands." Today, as we give a new name to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, we ask that the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument be blessed with peace.

These islands are a monument to the sacred native Hawaiians for thousands of years. They're a monument to the heroism of young Americans during World War II. And they've sheltered marine species as old as the islands themselves.

Thanks to each and every one of you for your work to care for this magnificent archipelago, and may God bless you all. (Applause.)

END 10:09 A.M. (Local)

Fact Sheet: Fulfilling the President's Vision for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument

Today, Mrs. Laura Bush will announce the Native Hawaiian name of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument. On June 15, 2006, the President established the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument and committed to giving it a native Hawaiian name. Mrs. Bush will announce the new name, **Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument**, in a ceremony in Honolulu, Hawaii, accompanied by Governor Linda Lingle and native Hawaiian elders.

- The name (pronounced Pa-pa-ha-now-mo-ku-ah-kay-uh) comes from an ancient Hawaiian tradition concerning the genealogy and formation of the Hawaiian Islands.

Mrs. Bush Is Furthering The President's Commitment To Good Stewardship Of Our Natural Resources. On March 1, Mrs. Bush visited the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument to increase public awareness of one of this Nation's most exceptional marine ecosystems. The Monument represents the largest single conservation area in our Nation's history and the largest protected marine area in the world. This area contains 2.7 million acres of coral reef, 14 million nesting seabirds, and 250 fish species; in total, it includes about 7000 species, a quarter of which exist nowhere else on Earth.

- While visiting the remote archipelago, Mrs. Bush toured Midway Atoll, viewed the bird population, participated in conservation activities, and toured historic buildings significant to the Battle of Midway.

The President's FY08 Budget Supports Continued Protection Of The Region. The President's ocean budget builds on progress made in implementing his Ocean Action Plan of 2004.

- The President's budget includes an additional \$2.9 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to address management needs in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) as well as for infrastructure priorities on Midway Atoll.
- The ocean initiative, which represents \$143 million in new funding over the President's FY07 request, also includes \$8 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for management and enforcement activities at the Marine National Monument.

Our Duty Is To Use The Land and Seas Wisely. Americans are united in the belief we must preserve our natural heritage and safeguard the environment around us for future generations. This belief is affirmed with the President's establishment of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument, and through other conservation efforts:

- **Marine Debris Removal.** Marine debris, including derelict fishing gear and plastics, continue to affect our marine ecosystems and the living resources that inhabit them. In 2006, NOAA picked up 21 tons of marine debris in the NWHI, totaling 563 tons between 1996 and 2006. In addition to marine debris modeling and research efforts to successfully predict debris location and movements, the President's FY08 budget includes \$590,000 for debris removal in the NWHI. But work is needed to address the sources of marine debris, including at the international level.
- **Centennial Parks Initiative.** In celebration of the 90th anniversary of the National Park Service, President Bush directed the creation of specific performance goals and select signature projects and programs to enhance our National Parks during the decade

leading up to their 2016 centennial celebration. This provides unique opportunities to leverage government investments, private philanthropy, and technology to connect visitors coming to the main Hawaiian Islands, the USS Arizona Memorial, and Pearl Harbor to the history of Midway Atoll and America's Victory in the Pacific along with the natural and cultural treasures in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

- **World Heritage Status.** The State of Hawaii, working with its Federal partners, is finalizing its application for the Monument to be placed on the United States tentative list for possible World Heritage Status site nomination in 2009. The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument embodies World Heritage and American ideals of stewardship of natural and cultural heritage in an area of national significance and is an ideal candidate to become a World Heritage site.

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Mrs. Laura Bush visits the Battle of Midway Memorial on the parade grounds of Midway Island Thursday, March 1, 2007. Midway Atoll was the site of the World War II Battle of Midway on June 4, 1942. The U.S. Navy defeated a Japanese attack against Midway Islands, marking a turning point in the war in the Pacific theater. White House photo by Shealah Craighead