



News Release



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CONTACT: DOC: Richard Mills or Dan Nelson,
202-482-4883
DOI: S. Wolfe/J. Moody
202-208-6416
Russell Pang, Governor's Office
808-586-0043
Delores Clarke, NOAA OPA
808-532-6411

Commerce and Interior Secretaries and Hawaii's Governor Announce Framework for Protecting Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument

Honolulu, Hawaii— Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne and Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle today signed a Memorandum of Agreement for managing and protecting the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument.

Signed at the State Capitol in Honolulu, this agreement is a critical step in setting the framework for how the two federal departments and the state will work together to implement their shared vision of resource management and protection for the new national monument. The monument, created by a proclamation of President Bush on June 15, 2006, is the largest single area dedicated to conservation in the history of our country and the largest protected marine area in the world.

“Being a good steward requires a long-term commitment to protect and wisely manage the natural resources of this treasure in a comprehensive way,” said Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez. “President Bush has a vision to preserve this national marine treasure. Today we are joining with our partners in committing that the unique NWHI ecosystems and the wildlife they support will be protected forever. I would like to thank Governor Lingle, Senator Inouye, and the entire Hawaii delegation for their tireless efforts in protecting this new national monument.”

“Today is an extraordinary day in the history of conservation. . . . we are establishing a new blueprint for the protection and conservation of one of the world's beautiful and unique ecosystems,” said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. “Today, we are ensuring that the monument is not just a line on a map – it is a conservation area that will be managed cooperatively, using the best available science, while preserving cultural ties dating back thousands of years between Native Hawaiians and their sacred lands and waters.”

“The State of Hawaii is blessed to have such an important natural and cultural resource in our island chain,” said Governor Linda Lingle. “It is a great privilege to have the shared seamless responsibility, together with the federal government, environmental conservationists and Native Hawaiian organizations to protect and manage the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument for future generations.”

The Memorandum of Agreement provides the general terms and conditions as well as the objectives and responsibilities under which the two departments and Hawaii—co-trustees for the monument--will cooperate and manage the resources of the monument. The Agreement creates a Senior Executive Board, consisting of a senior-level designee from each of the co-trustees, to set overall management policies for the monument. It also creates a Monument Management Board, consisting of the senior managers from each agency’s local office, to carry out day-to-day management of the monument.

The new Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument 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 monument is managed by the Department of the Interior’s U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Commerce Department’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in close coordination with the State of Hawaii.

Additionally, Interior’s U.S. Fish and Wildlife today will release its draft interim Visitor Services Plan for Midway National Wildlife Refuge, which is part of the marine national monument. The Plan lays the groundwork for increased public visitation to the atoll. Americans will have the opportunity to experience the richness of the atoll’s wildlife and the symbols of freedom that commemorate the sacrifice made by those who defended our country in World War II.

For more information on the Northwestern Hawaiian Island Marine National Monument, please visit <http://www.hawaiireef.noaa.gov/> and www.fws.gov/pacificislands/monument.html.

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