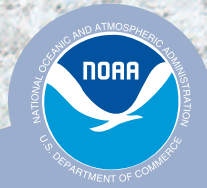


Pacific Islands Region  
**Hawaiian Monk Seals**



**NOAA  
FISHERIES  
SERVICE**

## Frequently Asked Questions About Hawaiian Monk Seal Critical Habitat

NOAA Fisheries is proposing to revise Critical Habitat for the endangered Hawaiian monk seal under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) go into further detail about this process.

### What is critical habitat?

Critical habitat is a term defined in the ESA, and refers to an area that contains habitat features that are essential for the survival and recovery of a listed species, which may require special management considerations or protections. Under the ESA, Federal agencies must take precautions to insure that activities that they fund, authorize (permit) or carry out do not destroy or adversely modify identified critical habitat.

### Why is NOAA Fisheries revising critical habitat now?

In July of 2008, NOAA Fisheries received a petition to revise critical habitat for the Hawaiian monk seal. This required that NOAA Fisheries review the best available science to determine if the current designation accurately describes the habitat needs of the species. Since the 1988 designation, new information has become available revealing that monk seals are foraging at greater depths and are successfully using habitat in the main Hawaiian Islands. The declining status of the population and the available information have led us to propose this revision in order to accurately describe habitat features that will promote the conservation of the species.

### How did NOAA determine Hawaiian monk seal critical habitat?

Critical habitat is based on what habitat features are essential for the survival and recovery of a species. The proposed essential features for the Hawaiian monk seal include:

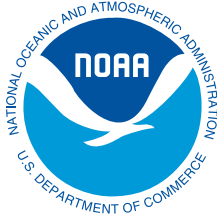
- Coastal areas where seals haul out for pupping, nursing, resting, and molting
- Marine nursery grounds next to pupping habitat
- Marine areas where seals hunt and feed
- Adequate amounts of food
- Low levels of human disturbance

### Public Input

NOAA Fisheries is soliciting comments from the public on all aspects of the proposed designation. The federal register notice, supporting documents, and details regarding comment submission for the Proposed Revision to Critical Habitat for the Hawaiian Monk Seal can be found at [http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd\\_critical\\_habitat.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_critical_habitat.html)

Public comments must be received within the public comment period to be considered for the final rule.

More Hawaiian monk seal information may be found on our website: [http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd\\_hawaiian\\_monk\\_seal.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/PRD/prd_hawaiian_monk_seal.html)



**Areas Proposed for Hawaiian Monk Seal Critical Habitat in the main Hawaiian Islands:**

- Coastlines five meters inland from the shoreline
- Marine waters from the shoreline out to the 500 meter depth contour

**Areas Not Included in the Proposed Designation**

**Kauai:**

- Hanalei Bay and Pier, Kikiaola Harbor
- Kilauea Pt. cliff area
- Na Pali coast cliff, Nawiliwili Harbor
- Port Allen Harbor
- Waikaea Canal, Wailua Ramp

**Oahu:**

- Pearl Harbor to Kapua Channel
- Haleiwa Boat Harbor
- Hawaii Kai Harbor and Maunaloa Ramp
- Kalaheo Barbers Point Harbor and Koolina Harbor
- Kaneohe Bay and Heeia Kea Harbor
- Waianae small Boat Harbor

**Molokai:**

- Haleolono Harbor
- Kaunakakai Pier
- Kalaupapa Harbor

**Lanai:**

- Nakalahale Cliff
- Kaholo Pali
- Manele Harbor
- Kamalapau Harbor

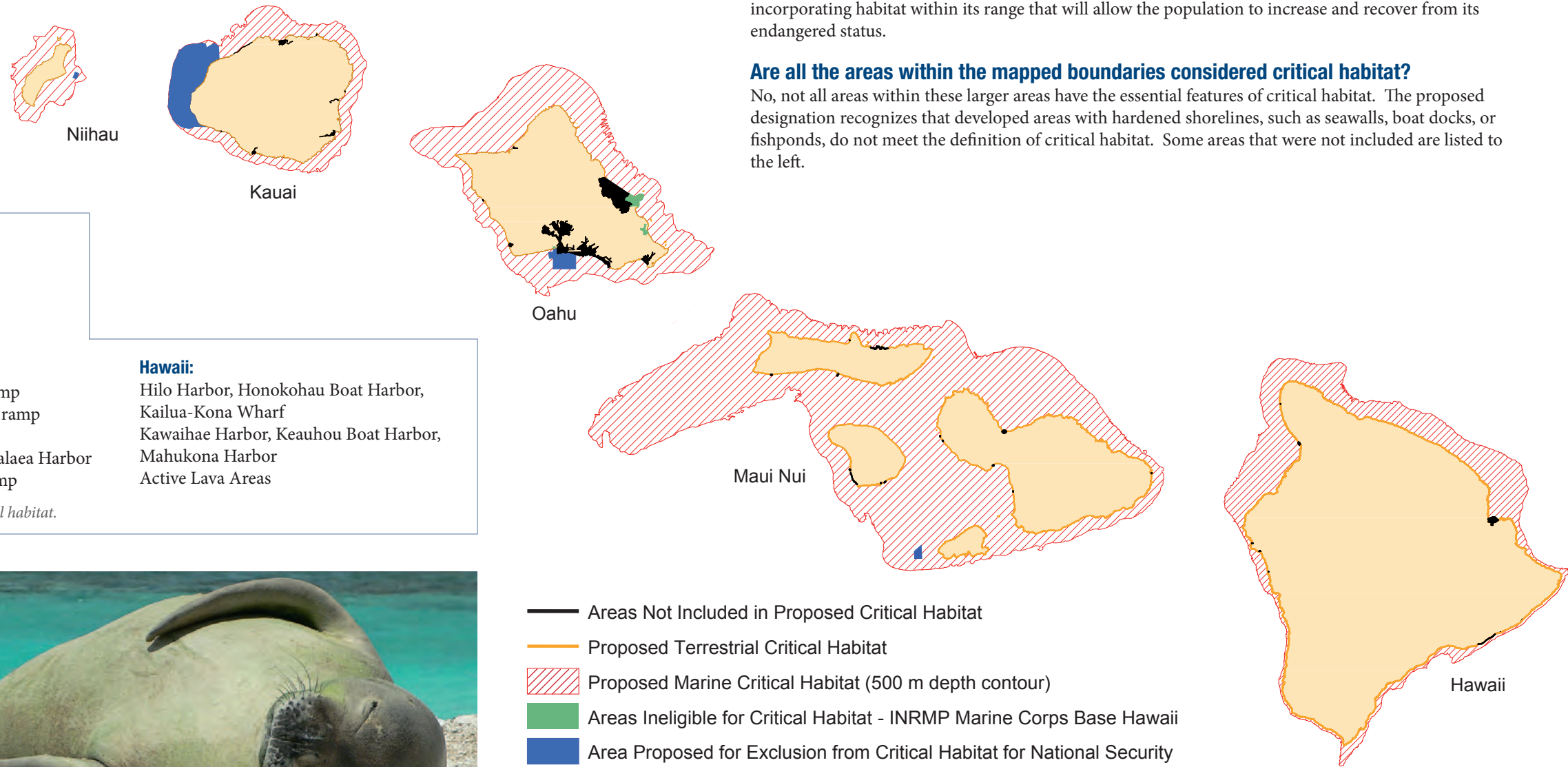
**Maui:**

- Hana Wharf and Ramp
- Kahului Harbor and ramp
- Kihei Boat Ramp
- Lahaina Harbor, Maalaea Harbor
- Mala Wharf and Ramp

**Hawaii:**

- Hilo Harbor, Honokohau Boat Harbor, Kailua-Kona Wharf
- Kawaihae Harbor, Keauhou Boat Harbor, Mahukona Harbor
- Active Lava Areas

\*Areas not included in the critical habitat designation do not meet the definition of critical habitat.



**Why is the Proposed Hawaiian monk seal Critical Habitat Designation so Large?**

The proposed designation not only meets the biological needs of the wide-ranging, and solitary Hawaiian monk seal, but also takes into account the recovery needs of the Hawaiian monk seal by incorporating habitat within its range that will allow the population to increase and recover from its endangered status.

**Are all the areas within the mapped boundaries considered critical habitat?**

No, not all areas within these larger areas have the essential features of critical habitat. The proposed designation recognizes that developed areas with hardened shorelines, such as seawalls, boat docks, or fishponds, do not meet the definition of critical habitat. Some areas that were not included are listed to the left.

**Scientific Name:** *Monachus schauinslandi*

**Status:** Endangered. The overall population is in decline due primarily to poor juvenile survival in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

**Threats to Hawaiian Monk Seal Survival and Recovery:**

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Food Limitation      | Male Aggression   |
| Shark Predation      | Human Interaction |
| Infectious Diseases  | Biotoxins         |
| Habitat Loss         | Vessel Groundings |
| Fishery Interactions | Contaminants      |



**Geographic Range:** The Hawaiian monk seal range is described as the Hawaiian Archipelago and Johnston Atoll. A majority of the Hawaiian monk seal population resides in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands; however a growing population exists throughout the main Hawaiian Islands.

**Monk Seal Habitat Use:**

Hawaiian monk seals are wide-ranging, air-breathing aquatic carnivores that spend a majority of their time in the ocean, but continue to rely on terrestrial (land) habitat throughout all life stages.

- Marine habitat use: foraging, socializing, mating, resting, thermo-regulating and traveling.
- Terrestrial (land) habitat use: resting, avoiding predators, molting, pupping (give birth), and nursing.

**Critical Habitat and You**

**Will I still be able to recreate in beach areas that have been designated as critical habitat for the Hawaiian monk seal?**

Yes. A critical habitat designation does not regulate access to, and recreation on, the public beaches of Hawaii.

**Will I still be able to fish for subsistence or recreation from shorelines that have been designated as critical habitat for the Hawaiian monk seal?**

Yes. Subsistence and recreational fishing from coastal shorelines in the State of Hawaii is not a Federally funded or authorized activity; therefore, coastal shoreline fishing should not be affected by the designation.

