

Hawai'i non-profit organizations in support of Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument expansion

August 15, 2014

Dear President Obama:

As representatives of Hawai'i's non-profit community interested in the environmental, economic, and social health of our islands, we write in strong support of your intention to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. We urge you to expand the Monument to the full 200-nautical-mile United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). We believe this protection will help ensure that future generations are able to continue to enjoy the benefits provided by a healthy, clean, and productive environment.

The Pacific Remote Islands area consists of five uninhabited island or atoll complexes (Wake, Jarvis, Howland and Baker Islands, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll). These refuges and the waters that surround them provide essential habitat for:

- 14 million seabirds of 19 species (e.g. Hawaiian petrel)
- 22 marine mammal species, seven of which are endangered (e.g. sperm whale)
- 5 species of threatened and endangered sea turtles (e.g. leatherback)
- Expansive shallow and deep water coral reefs—with some corals up to 5,000 years old
- Almost 250 seamounts, or undersea mountains, within the US EEZ, which are hotspots of biodiversity. Some widely ranging species, including dolphins, use these seamounts as stopovers on trips between the Hawaiian Islands and other Pacific areas.

The Pacific Remote Islands are a local treasure that support and help maintain the productivity of Hawai'i's ocean ecosystem; they also are a vital link in ensuring the health of the broader central Pacific. We understand that fish caught within the proposed Monument expansion accounts for less than 5% of the US tuna catch in the central and western Pacific. However, we believe that the benefits of protecting these uninhabited ocean jewels far transcend the value of what can be removed for short-term commercial gain.

We are all connected to the ocean, whether through our work or in our personal lives. We believe a productive, thriving marine environment is of critical importance for sustaining Hawai'i's natural environment for our current and future generations.

As non-profit organizations committed to a healthy and sustainable future for our islands, we urge you to expand the Monument to the full 200-nautical-mile US EEZ.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
State-wide

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