

Letter from Hawai'i Residents in Support of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument Expansion

August 15, 2014

Dear President Obama:

As residents of the Hawai'i an Islands, who care about the future of our Pacific home, we enthusiastically support your announcement to expand protection of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. We strongly urge you to extend the Monument to the full 200-nautical-mile United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

This is a unique moment in history. As a former kama'āina (Hawai'i resident), no president before you has shared your unique affinity and respect for the ocean. We appreciate your intent to designate a Pacific treasure as your first ocean monument, and believe this welcomed act will provide a gift to our future generations, allowing them to enjoy the benefits of a healthy and thriving ocean ecosystem.

As you know, the Pacific Remote Islands consists of five uninhabited island or atoll complexes (Wake, Jarvis, Howland and Baker Islands, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll). With a Monument expansion out to 200 miles, these refuges and the waters that surround them would protect some of the richest areas on Earth for sea life, with irreplaceable natural resources including:

- 14 million seabirds of 19 species (e.g. Hawai'i an 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 used by widely ranging species, including dolphins, who stopover when traveling between the Hawai'i an Islands and other Pacific areas.

While 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, 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. In fact, recent studies have shown that fully protected marine reserves benefit fish populations, the ecosystem, and commercial fisheries outside the protected area.

The Pacific Remote Islands are a local treasure that support and help maintain the productivity of Hawai'i's ocean ecosystem on which we all depend; they also are a vital link in ensuring the health of the broader central Pacific ecosystem.

As residents of the Hawai'i an Islands, we are all connected to the ocean for our food, our recreation, our culture, our peace, and our home. With your lead, we can pass this heritage on to our children, and to their children.

We respectfully urge you to expand the Monument to the full 200-nautical-mile US EEZ.

With Our Aloha,

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