

## Hawai'i will have role in managing Pacific's newest monuments

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The selection of three Pacific areas as marine national monuments has special meaning for Hawai'i.

Not only can the areas serve as a yardstick for comparing the health of our marine ecosystem, but a local office will help manage them, officials said.

Yesterday, President Bush declared the Mariana Trench, Pacific Remote Islands and Rose Atoll as marine national monuments whose combined areas covers more than 195,000 square miles of ocean.

The Remote Islands monument includes Palmyra Atoll, which is owned and co-managed by The Nature Conservancy's Hawai'i chapter. All three monument areas also fall under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, whose Hawai'i office will create management plans for them over the next two years.

## heritage nomination

Conservation efforts in the Pacific got another boost yesterday when Bush announced he had nominated the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Centre for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

If accepted for the list, Papahānaumokuākea would join a globally exclusive list of unique and diverse sites that include East Africa's Serengeti, the Egyptian Pyramids, Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park and the Galapagos Islands.

"World Heritage sites truly belong to all people of the world," said Gov. Linda Lingle in a press release about the nomination. "They incorporate the most universal and significant aspects of natural and cultural heritage as well as legacy of the past and present for future generations."

Papahānaumokuākea is being nominated as a "mixed" site for both its natural and cultural resource values because of its unique geology, ecology, biology, Native Hawaiian cultural heritage and its significance to the world, the press release said.

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, in the northwestern Hawaiian archipelago, encompasses 139,797 square miles of Pacific Ocean.

## protection expands

The new status of the three new marine national monuments will broaden protection for some of the areas already under refuge protection from as little as three miles to 50 miles.

The increase in the area of protection at Palmyra Atoll will enhance research and conservation efforts under way there, said Suzanne Case, executive director for The Nature Conservancy's Hawai'i chapter.

The Nature Conservancy maintains a research station on the atoll's major island, Cooper Island, and co-manages the atoll with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The station is operated by the Palmyra Atoll Research Consortium that includes the University of Hawai'i, Stanford University and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

Studies there already found that the atoll and Kingman Reef, which is 35 miles away, are among the most biodiverse marine ecosystems on Earth, Case said. They harbor the highest fish biomass in the Pacific and are among the few places still dominated by sharks and other predators, she said.

Palmyra is home to five times as many coral species as the Florida Keys and to globally threatened species such as the coconut crab and green sea turtle, Case said.

The atoll is only six feet above sea level but has a rare pisonia grandis forest and has more than 1 million sea birds nesting there, she said.

The area is unique and considered a healthy ecosystem that can be the model for improving reefs, near-shore environment and ocean, Case said.

Hawai'i used to look like Palmyra and could once again, she said.

"It gives us a vision for the future that's very connected with the past," Case said.

## 'natural laboratory'

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office in Hawai'i will manage the new monuments, said Don Palawski, refuge manager with the service.

The new designation brings restrictions, including no fishing out to 50 miles from land, Palawski said. Fish & Wildlife will monitor and inventory the islands, reefs and near ocean, but the U.S. Department of Commerce will have jurisdiction from 12 miles to 50 miles out, he said.

The new monument could be a means of comparison to judge how Hawai'i marine ecology is surviving, Palawski said.

"These protected areas provide a natural laboratory across these vast distances in the Pacific," he said.

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**Correction:** The Nature Conservancy owns Cooper Island, the main island of Palmyra Atoll. The rest of the atoll is owned by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. A previous version of this story did not make that clear.

## Additional Facts

World Heritage Sites

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument has been nominated to join an exclusive list of global treasures that includes:

878 sites

145 countries

679 cultural sites

174 natural sites

25 mixed natural and cultural sites

## NEW MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENTS

**Mariana Trench Marine National Monument** (3 components), 95,216 square miles. Comprises waters and submerged land of the three northernmost islands, Mariana Trench and undersea volcanoes and thermal vents.

**Pacific Remote Island Marine National Monument** (protects coral reef and ecosystems), 86,890 square miles. Comprises Kingman Reef, Palmyra Atoll, Howland Island, Baker Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll and Wake Island.

**Rose Atoll Marine National Monument**, in America Samoa, 13,450 square miles.

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