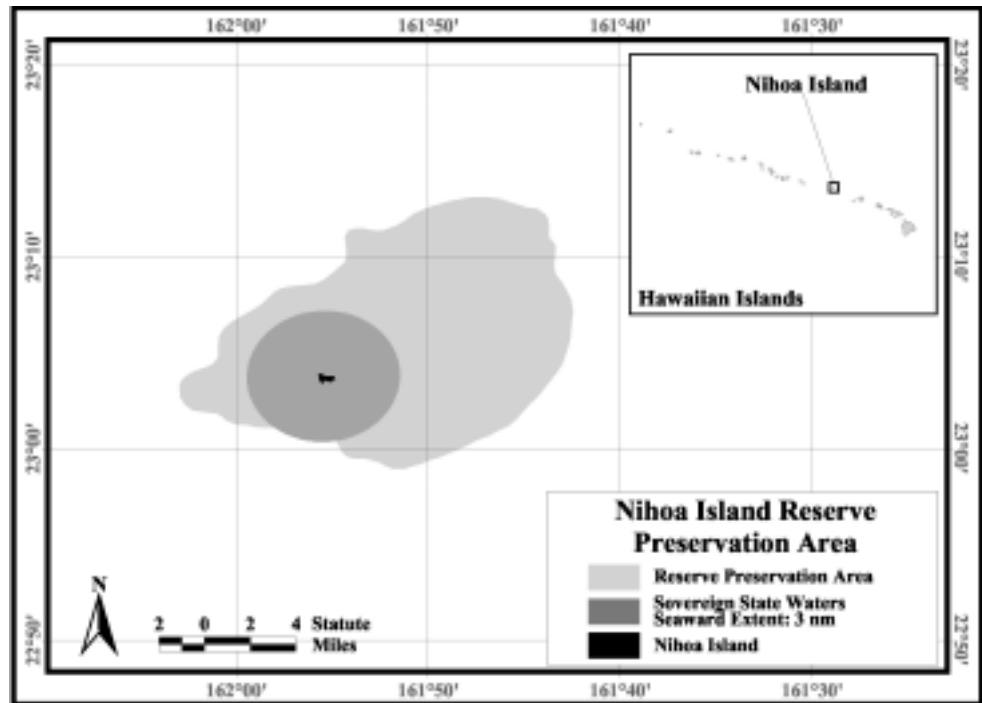


## Nihoa Island Reserve Preservation Area

### MAP



This reserve preservation area is approximated using fathoms (fm) but shall be represented in future maps by the Secretary using straight-line boundaries in longitude and latitude coordinates to clearly encompass the reserve preservation area and to provide clarity and ease of identification.

### RESERVE PRESERVATION AREA

The Reserve Preservation Area for Nihoa Island includes the waters and submerged lands from the seaward boundary of Hawaii state waters out to a mean depth of 100 fathoms, *provided that* commercial bottomfishing and trolling for pelagic species by recreational fishers and commercial bottomfishers shall be allowed to continue seaward of a mean depth of 25 fathoms, unless and until the Secretary determines otherwise after adequate public review and comment.

### ENVIRONMENT

Nihoa Island, also known as Bird Island, lies 130 miles (245 km) northwest of Nihau. With about 170 acres of land, it is the largest volcanic island in the northwestern chain. The island is characterized by steep slopes and sheer sea cliffs, which are clearly visible from a distance. Nihoa's submerged coral reef habitat totals approximately 142,000 acres and is the remnant of a former volcanic cone. The northern edge of the reef is a steep cliff made up of successive layers of lava through which numerous volcanic extrusions (dikes) are visible.

Nihoa supports coral communities with very limited total habitat, most of which is not protected from the heavy and chronic wave action that strikes this small island from all directions. These habitats consist of the submerged portions of sea cliffs close to shore, caves & lava tubes, ledges, overhangs, basalt pinnacles, boulders, cobbles, sand deposits, basalt benches & slopes, trenches and shelves. All of these features have been shaped by and are constantly eroded by the pounding waves. The rigorous environment and isolated nature of Nihoa has limited the number of corals that have successfully colonized the shallow habitats encircling the island. Due to the scouring effects of sand and turbulent waves, most of the 20 species of corals only survive at depths greater than 30 feet and nowhere is coral cover greater than 25%.

Although corals are not abundant in the shallow waters around Nihoa, reef fish sharks, jacks, monk seals and other predators are common to the island. Due to a limited number of habitat types, however, species diversity of reef fishes is low when compared to other atolls and islands in the NWHI chain. Nihoa supports a small population of endangered Hawaiian monk seals with limited reproduction, probably maintained by immigration from other breeding colonies. Although Nihoa was inhabited during the 16th century, human disturbances have been minimal in the nearshore waters around the island in recent times.

The Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge is currently administered out to 10 fathoms at Nihoa Island.