

NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESERVE
RESERVE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Non-Government (Voting)

William Aila Jr. (Chair)
State of Hawai'i
Linda Paul (Vice Chair)
Conservation
Rick Gaffney (Secretary)
Recreational Fishing
Solomon Kaho'ohalahala
Native Hawaiian Elder
Haleloha Ayau
Native Hawaiian
Pelika Andrade
Native Hawaiian
VACANT
Education
Phil Fernandez
Commercial Fishing
VACANT
Research
Don Schug
Research
Jean Kenyon
Research
Richard Lee
Ocean-Related Tourism
Kanoë Morishige
Conservation
Audrey Newman
Conservation
Judith Cucco
Citizen-at-Large

Government (Non-Voting)

Athline Clark
Papahānaumokuākea MNM
Allen Tom
*Hawaiian Islands
Humpback Whales NMS*
Hoku Ka'aekuahiwi-Pousima
NOAA Fisheries PIRO
Brandon Jim On
NOAA OLE
Brad Kaalelo Wong
Office of Hawaiian Affairs
Maile Norman
U.S. Coast Guard
Janice Fukawa
U.S. Department of Defense
Joshua DeMello
WPRFMC
Dan Polhemus
*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Ecological Services*
Jared Underwood
*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Refuges*
Brian Neilson
State of Hawai'i - DLNR

Meeting December 9, 2020

9:00am – 1:00pm

Via GoToWebinar

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

RAC Voting Members Present: William Aila Jr. (State of Hawai'i, Chair); Judith Cucco (Citizen-At-Large), Rick Gaffney (Recreational Fishing, Secretary); Solomon Kaho'ohalahala (Native Hawaiian Elder), Jean Kenyon (Research), Kanoë Morishige (Conservation), Audrey Newman (Conservation), Linda Paul (Conservation, Vice Chair), Don Schug (Research), Pelika Andrade (Native Hawaiian); and Haleloha Ayau (Native Hawaiian).

RAC Voting Members Absent: Don Schug (Research), Phil Fernandez (Commercial Fishing) and Rick Lee (Ocean-Related Tourism).

RAC Non-Voting Members Present: Thorne Abbott (Conservation Alternate), Nakoa Goo (Native Hawaiian Alternate), Robert Leinau (Conservation Alternate), Heather Howard (Education Alternate), Jennifer Barrett (Citizen-At-Large Alternate), Athline Clark (NOAA/Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument [ONMS-PMNM]); Brandon Jim On (NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Law Enforcement [NMFS-OLE]); Brian Neilson (State of Hawai'i/Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources [DLNR-DAR]); Cynthia Vanderlip (State of Hawai'i/DLNR, Division of Forestry and Wildlife [DLNR-DOFAW]); Matt Saunter [DLNR-DOFAW]; Naomi Worcester [DLNR-DOFAW]; Cindy Among-Serrao (for Allen Tom, NOAA/ONMS, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary [HIHWNMS]); Janice Fukawa (Department of Defense, U.S. Navy [DOD-USN]); Joshua DeMello (Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council [WPRFMC]); Maile Norman (U.S. Coast Guard [USCG]); Dan Polhemus (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services [USFWS-ES]); Hoku Ka'aekuahiwi-Pousima (NOAA/NMFS, Pacific Islands Regional Office [PIRO]); and Jared Underwood (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Refuges [USFWS-NWR]).

RAC Non-Voting Members Absent: Allen Tom (NOAA/ONMS-HIHWNMS) and Brad Wong (Office of Hawaiian Affairs).

ONMS Leadership: John Armor (ONMS Director), Kristina Kekuewa (ONMS Regional Director-Pacific Island Region), Eric Roberts (ONMS-PMNM Deputy Superintendent).

ONMS Staff: Alyssa Miller, Andy Collins, Jenny Crawford, Kalani Quiocho, Justin Rivera, Justin Umholtz, and Malia Evans.

Members of the Public: Barb Mayer, Edward Lindelof, Jessica Kondell, Kevin Kirvig, Mark Hixon, Michelle Burt, Neal Langerman and Tammy Harp.

- I. CALL TO ORDER (Aila Jr.)
- II. REVIEW & APPROVAL OF AGENDA (Aila Jr.)
- III. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES (Aila Jr.)

Representative Paul moved to accept the minutes and Representative Gaffney seconded the motion. The minutes from October 22, 2020 were adopted unanimously.

- IV. BRIEF REVIEW & SUMMARY: PREVIOUS ISSUES, ACTION ITEMS, AND STATUS (Clark)

In-Progress

- a. RAC/SAC Action: Letter to ONMS Director John Armor regarding Executive Orders 13792 and 13795. This item is presently on hold.
- b. Update on Fall 2020 round of recruitment: There was a great recruit pool. The RAC Selection Committee is in the review process and will submit their rankings and recommendations to the site superintendent. We hope to fill the seats by the next RAC meeting and an orientation will be conducted for new representatives. The next round of recruitment will happen in spring 2021.
- c. State of Hawai'i Action: Keep RAC informed on *30x30 Initiative*. This item was covered in the State's report.
- d. ONMS Action: Keep RAC informed of NFWF funding and activities. A new round of grants will be awarded soon and new grantees will be asked to provide a presentation on their research proposals at subsequent RAC meetings.
- e. NMFS Action: Keep RAC informed of any changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This item was covered in NMFS's report.

- V. PRESENTATION: NOAA OFFICE OF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES (Armor)
See presentation posted at the PMNM website.

- a. Program Highlights:
 - i. Two NMS sites in the expansion process - Monitor and Florida Keys. One proposed site in the designation process - Lake Ontario. One new site close to being added to the NMS system - Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast. One site expanded - Flower Garden Bank NMS.
 - ii. Several Condition Reports and Management plans are in progress.
 - iii. Virtual programs: There have been 47 virtual advisory council meetings to date, system wide. Extensive new/expanded virtual reality content has been developed. Online boater training developed. Dozens of new webinars aired, including a climate change series, teacher workshops and distance learning for students and children.
- b. Operations Highlights:
 - i. ONMS has adopted a risk-averse approach to field operations for COVID.
 - ii. Small Boat Acquisitions: ONMS has been able to start recapitalizing. Three small boats; Olympic Coast, Florida Keys and Monterey Bay have been replaced.
- c. Funding for FY-21 Highlights:
 - i. Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) budget is slightly reduced from last fiscal year.
 - ii. Procurement, Acquisition and Construction (PAC) budget is likely to be increased.

- d. Upcoming:
 - i. ONMS is preparing for NOAA's 50th anniversary in October 2022. There will be multiple activities. The Council will participate in these activities, as well as other upcoming PMNM anniversaries.
 - ii. A new ONMS Strategic Plan is being developed with renewed focus on justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, climate change, and tribal and indigenous engagement.

VI. MONUMENT CO-TRUSTEE/CO-MANAGEMENT AGENCY UPDATES

- a. NOAA-ONMS (Clark): See presentation and report posted at the PMNM website.
- b. NOAA-NMFS(Ka'aekuahiwi-Pousima): No updates on the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The Marianas NMS Draft Management Plan will be rolled out soon. The public comment period is expected to happen in January-February 2021. The Pacific Remote Islands MNM Draft Management Plan is in process; in partnership with FWS and communities. The Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center is planning to hold FY-21 field camps for most programs including Hawaiian monk seals and habitat management.
- c. USFWS Refuges (Underwood): Operations are increasing after being slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent successful missions include: 1) the resupply of Midway; 2) in partnership with NOAA, the Papahānaumokuā Marine Debris Project and others cleaned up debris and removed entrapments/barriers at FFS-Tern Island. Over 80,000 pounds of materials were removed by a team of 11 people in 10 days; 3) working with the NASA Project and others on remote sensing monitoring and eDNA monitoring for invasive algae at Pearl and Hermes Atoll. Completed a mission that included ground-truthing of remote sensing data and collection of algae and water samples. Samples were also collected from Midway and FFS to determine if eDNA can be a viable way to identify the presence of *Chondria*; and 4) a barge successfully delivered the armour stone for the seawall repairs and new fire trucks for the airport. It backhauled large amounts of rubbish and construction debris, creating more open space for wildlife. FWS is currently interviewing candidates for the Midway Refuge Manager position and hopes to have a new manager in place by January or February of 2021. The mice eradication project has been postponed until 2022 due to logistical constraints and uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- d. USFWS Ecological Services (Polhemus): Hawai'i Climate Change Indicators presentation posted at the PMNM website. Key points: 1) 2020 will end up as the second hottest year on record, and this string of warm years shows no signs of abating; 2) as a result, the Northern Pacific Ocean is carrying excess heat content into the winter, with most of this lying to the east of the Monument; 3) La Niña conditions are present and expect to persist through spring of 2021. This generally leads to cooler and wetter than average winters in Hawai'i; 4) There is a 0% probability of thermal stress to the Monument's coral reefs this winter and through spring of 2021; 5) Monument reefs will not experience any thermal stress until April 2021, at the earliest; 6) no tropical cyclone events have occurred in the Monument this year and the cyclone season is now over until next summer; 7) a La Niña pattern is not favorable for Eastern Pacific cyclone formation. We will be in La Niña until approximately June. Cooler and wetter weather is likely; 8) Sea level continues to rise at 3-5 mm per year and this trend is increasing; 9) inundation is a long-term problem that will not go away and may increase over time depending on future melting trends in Greenland and Antarctica.

- e. State of Hawai‘i –DAR(Nielson):The *Marine 30x30 Initiative* roadmap will be released this week and will be available at the DLNR website. DLNR has conducted 9 statewide meetings to conduct initial talks with stakeholders (including fishers) on herbivorous reef fees and urchin. Zoom has not been optimal technology for reaching fishers. A 10th meeting will be conducted on December 10, 2020 with East Hawai‘i stakeholders. Next steps are to synthesize the input from the meetings and develop an herbivore management plan. DAR will share a draft management plan with the Council in March. DLNR and partners supported the University of Arizona Global Airborne Observatory Remote Sensing Project in Hawai‘i. The aerial coral mapping data were just released and maps will be released soon. These maps will be used to assess habitat and compare the extent of coral cover since 2019 bleaching, among other things. DAR would love to see a repeat of this survey in the NWHI. DLNR is taking immediate steps to comply with a new order issued from the First Circuit Court, requiring Chapter 343 environmental review for issuance of new or renewed annual commercial marine licenses (CML) to be used for aquarium fishing purposes under HRS 189-2. This is in addition to the Hawai‘i Supreme Court 2017 ruling requiring Chapter 343 environmental review for issuance of fine-mesh net permits used for aquarium fishing under HRS 188-31. Additional clarifications on implementation are expected from the courts.
- f. State of Hawai‘i – DOFAW (Saunter and Worcester): See written report posted at the PMNM website. Mr. Saunter, Ms. Worcester and two other team members recently returned from an 8-month deployment at Kure Atoll. They were replaced by the winter crew, which had to be quarantined for two weeks before arrival. Mahalo to FWS for logistical and other support enabling crews to quarantine on Midway Atoll.
- g. OHA (Wong) No report. Superintendent Clark noted that OHA sponsored an excellent webinar on December 8, 2020. The webinar focused on nomenclature and the recent naming of several PMNM plants and animals. A recording of the webinar will be archived at the OHA website and a summary of the newly named plants and animals is available at: <https://www.oha.org/news/hawaiian-names-given-to-five-species-at-papahanaumokuakea/>.
- h. USCG & NOAA OLE (Norman & Jim On): No report.

VII. PRESENTATION: THE OCCURRENCE OF HUMPBACK WHALES ACROSS THE NWHI ARCHIPELAGO REVEALED THROUGH ACOUSTICS (Lammers) See presentation posted at PMNM website. Key Points:

- a. Humpback whale song was detected throughout the NWHI, at nearly every island and shoal. Only the males sing. From south to north, a lot of singing at Middle Bank, Nihoa and Mokumanamana, Raita Bank, Maro reef, Northampton seamounts and Laysan. Less at other places. Based on the distribution of recorded song, two main regions of humpback whale occurrence are hypothesized.
- b. The data show that MHI and NWHI both are important breeding habitats. NWHI was a gap in the earlier SPLASH surveys.
- c. The occurrence of song in PMNM suggests the population may be more structured than previously assumed.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- a. Former RAC member, Tammy Harp, provided the following questions and comments:
 - i. Did the acronym for the Reserve Change? RAC Coordinator Jennifer Crawford responded that there was a typo in the email and the NWHICRER acronym did not change.

- ii. Ms. Harp commented that she enjoyed Mr. Armor’s presentation and suggested adding ‘native and aboriginal leaders’ to his stakeholder consultation list.
- iii. Ms. Harp commented that she also enjoyed Kalani Quiocho’s presentation and would like to see more of him.
- iv. Ms. Harp requested that Randy Kosaki please email her information about the size of coral samples needed to do age estimations.
- v. Did the Wave Glider project follow protocols to prevent invasive species? Superintendent Clark responded that invasive species prevention was considered and protocols were followed as required for the Wave Glider project.
- vi. Ms Harp commented that the 20-Year NWHICRER anniversary presentation was very emotional, and said that she is looking forward to the 25th anniversary.

IX. ACTIONS/DECISION-MAKING

- a. NWHICRER Transition to NWHI NMS – Review and vote on draft letter to John Armor (Ayau, Kaho‘ohalahala, Paul & Schug)
 - i. Representative Paul provided an overview of the letter’s content. Representative Kenyon expressed support. Representative Goo suggested potentially adding a timeline of next steps. Superintendent Clark described how following the submittal of the letter and receipt of response, the RAC would need to discuss next steps at the March meeting. Chair Aila requested that this suggestion be held until March and Representative Goo agreed. Representative Newman made suggestions for updating and sharpening the opening sentences and Representative Paul agreed. A motion to make these non-substantive changes to the letter and then send to John Armor was made by Representative Gaffney and seconded by Representative Cucco. All approved and the motion was carried.
- b. RAC Profiles (Clark) – Superintendent Clark asked for the Council’s kōkua to complete the profiles.
- c. Revitalize Working Groups and Subcommittees (Clark) Superintendent Clark requested that primaries and alternates check-in regularly with their constituent communities and join working groups and subcommittees. A summary of the groups and current needs is as follows:
 - i. Council Administration and Operation Subcommittee (RAC Leadership)
 - ii. Member Recruitment and Selection Subcommittee – looking for additional members.
 - iii. Research Subcommittee – work plan in progress; need to complete.
 - iv. Education and Outreach Working Group – need to designate a Chair and add members.
 - v. Joint RAC/SAC Working Group – established to collaborate coordinate with joint efforts between sites. Representative Kaho‘ohalahala reported that a meeting will be scheduled with Jeff Walters and the first discussion will likely be focused on approaches to stranded koholā (whales). Superintendent Clark suggested having someone give a presentation on this issue at the next RAC meeting.
- d. Other Action: Coral Rule (Clark) – Superintendent Clark noted that members should feel free to work offline on this item, either individually or in groups. The coral species described in this new rule are not applicable to Hawai‘i.

- X. DECISION-MAKING, WRAP-UP AND CLOSING REMARKS (Aila Jr.)
Chair Aila expressed gratitude for the good works of the Council in 2020 and his hopes for the future. He asked the Council to continue to practice self-care and continue to do positive things.

2021 Meeting Dates

March 24, 2021

June 9, 2021

September 22, 2021

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