

NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESERVE  
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**RESOLUTION RELATING TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 13921**

**URGING ALL FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCIES OF THE PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT TO CONTINUE AND STRENGTHEN THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES THAT HAVE PROTECTED THE NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS OF THE NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS FOR MORE THAN 110 YEARS**

**WHEREAS**

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, which encompasses the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, is internationally recognized for its globally significant natural and cultural resources and has received increasing federal protection by Republican and Democratic Presidents since 1909.

**WHEREAS**

These invaluable resources may be harmed and their protections may be reduced by actions proposed under Executive Order 13921 of May 7, 2020 "To Promote American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth", especially Section 4, which invites Regional Fishery Management Councils to generate recommendations to "reduce burdens on domestic fishing and to increase production within sustainable fisheries."

**WHEREAS**

The ancient and remote Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in the North Pacific Ocean stretches over 1,200 miles from the island of Nihoa to Hōlanikū (Kure Atoll) and includes 3.5 million acres of some of the healthiest coral reefs in the world and is one of the most unspoiled places left on earth;

**WHEREAS**

In the Hawaiian creation chant Kumulipo and other traditions, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are considered a sacred place from which all life arises and returns, and they are important to Hawaiian history and Native Hawaiian cosmology which describes the coral polyp as the first of many ancestors that eventually include Native Hawaiian ancestors such as Papahānaumoku and Wākea for whom the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is named.

**WHEREAS**

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, which encompasses the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, is a region comprised of pinnacles, atolls, reefs, seamounts, banks, shoals and islands, was created by volcanoes that subsequently eroded and were overlaid by living coral colonies and is now home to a multitude of unique natural ecosystems that support more than 8,000 native species, many of whom remain unidentified or even unknown to science;

WHEREAS

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is a globally-significant repository of unique biodiversity, with endemic reef fishes accounting for upwards of 90 percent of the fish on the deep reefs and approximately half of the individuals on the shallow-water reefs, the highest level of endemism recorded from any marine ecosystem on Earth;

WHEREAS

The islands of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument provide nesting and foraging habitats for over 14 million seabirds, including albatross, petrels, shearwaters, tropicbirds, boobies, frigatebirds, noddies, and terns;

WHEREAS

Five species of marine turtles listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) frequent the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, including the critically endangered Hawksbill and Leatherback turtles, the endangered Olive Ridley and Loggerhead turtles, and the threatened Hawaiian Green turtle, which breeds and nests there;

WHEREAS

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument provides a critical habitat for the highly endangered Hawaiian monk seal and home to more than 20 cetacean species, including six that are federally and/or internationally recognized as endangered, and all of which are protected by the U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act;

WHEREAS

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is home to 22 species that the International Union for the Conservation of Nature has Red-listed;

WHEREAS

NOAA Fisheries prohibited longline fishing inside 50 nautical miles from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands for the protection of the endangered monk seal in 1991;

WHEREAS

The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument possess a rich maritime heritage stretching back long before written records, including Native Hawaiian chants and oral histories that tell of exploration and settlement in the area, whaling ships during the 19th and 20th centuries, and the significant role played by the 1942 Battle of Midway that changed the course of World War II;

WHEREAS

The islands, reefs, and shoals of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument have been protected for more than a 100 years by a succession of six United States Presidents (three Democrats, three Republicans) who considered its islands, coral reefs and diverse species worthy of increasing levels of protection by the American people;

WHEREAS

President William J. Clinton created the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve in 2000 for the protection of its resources which extends out to 50 nautical miles from its shores and mandated its designation as a national marine sanctuary;

WHEREAS

The State of Hawai'i under Republican Governor Linda Lingle and pursuant to HRS § 188-37 established the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge for the long-term conservation and protection of its coral reef ecosystems and related marine resources and species in state waters out to 3 nautical miles in 2002;

WHEREAS

President George W. Bush created the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (the Monument) in 2006; the Monument was later expanded by President Barrack Obama in 2016 with the support of Native Hawaiian leaders, Hawaii's entire Congressional delegation and over 6,000 stakeholders;

WHEREAS

The Monument was designated a mixed cultural and natural World Heritage Site under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 2010, joining global heritage giants that include the Great Pyramids, the Grand Canyon, the Serengeti and the Great Barrier Reef;

WHEREAS

The Monument provides critical protection for unique seamounts, submerged reefs, atolls, historic shipwrecks, unexplored deep-sea habitats, and more than 80 newly-identified marine species, and it presents an immense opportunity for exploration, research and new discoveries in an area almost undisturbed by humans;

WHEREAS

The Monument is managed by four co-trustees: the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the State of Hawai'i, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, guided by eight goals in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Management Plan:

1. Protect, preserve, maintain, and where appropriate restore the physical environment and the natural biological communities and their associated biodiversity, habitats, populations, native species, and ecological integrity;
2. Support, promote, and coordinate research, ecosystem characterization, and monitoring that increases understanding of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, improves management decision-making, and is consistent with conservation and protection;
3. Manage and only allow for human activities consistent with Proclamation 8031 to maintain ecological integrity and prevent or minimize negative impacts for long-term protection;
4. Provide for cooperative conservation including community involvement that achieves effective Monument operations and ecosystem-based management;
5. Enhance public understanding, appreciation, and support for protection of the natural, cultural, and historic resources;
6. Support Native Hawaiian practices consistent with long-term conservation and protection;

7. Identify, interpret, and protect Monument historic and cultural resources;
8. Offer visitor opportunities at Kuaihelani (Midway Atoll) to discover and appreciate the wildlife and beauty of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, enhance conservation, and honor its unique human history;

WHEREAS

The Monument supports premier education and interpretive facilities and remote outreach programs that bring the place to the people instead of the people to the place, in order to share important scientific and cultural discoveries with the public without disturbing the area and to inspire the global community to protect marine reef species and their habitats;

WHEREAS

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council, which includes representatives from the conservation, scientific, education, Native Hawaiian, commercial and recreation fishing, and ocean-related tourism communities, provides management advice to the Monument's NOAA superintendent and is a key public forum for community consultation on resource management issues;

WHEREAS

The Monument, situated in the middle of the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, is subject to a full range of environmental and anthropogenic stressors, such as discarded or lost fishing nets from distant fleets, vessel groundings, invasive species, and marine debris that entangles and kills wildlife and damages coral reef habitat and aids in the transport of alien species and disease, as well as climate change, coral bleaching and extreme weather events, all of which represent a continuing threat to these remote and fragile reefs;

WHEREAS

The Convention on Biological Diversity notes that the fundamental requirement for the conservation of biological diversity is the *in-situ* conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings;

WHEREAS

There is no evidence that commercial fishing restrictions in Monument waters are significantly diminishing the annual tuna catch of the Hawai'i-based longline fishery;

WHEREAS

The U.S. is a member of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPGC) and a signatory to the Convention for the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean, which has a mandate to conserve and manage migratory tuna stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of these stocks;

WHEREAS

Since the Monument was established, the Hawai'i-based longline fleet has had to cease fishing prior to the end of the fishing season because it had achieved or was about to exceed its annual catch quotas set by the WCPFC and NOAA Fisheries;

WHEREAS

NOAA Fisheries data indicates that the fraction of the Hawai'i-based longline fleet's effort spent in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has been relatively stable for decades;

WHEREAS

Various commercial fishing ventures have collapsed in the near-shore waters of the Monument over the last century due to overzealous commercial harvesting of the marine resources of these waters, and stocks of some targeted species have never fully recovered;

WHEREAS

The Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources has attested that commercial fishing restrictions are a key component of the proper care and management of the Monument's resources, and that weakening protections by allowing commercial fishing would run counter to the carefully considered outcome of an extensive public process;

WHEREAS

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council considers itself a sister advisory council to the other Pacific marine national monuments created under the Antiquities Act of 1906, which share many of the same stressors and threats to the diverse and unique ecosystems and species they each protect;

WHEREAS

The Monument and other marine national monuments in the Pacific provide a refuge for species protected under the Endangered Species Act and U.S. Marine Mammal Protection Act that may suffer injury or death as a result of interactions with commercial fisheries;

WHEREAS

The Monument and other marine national monuments in the Pacific may provide a refuge and protected spawning and nursery area for pelagic fish species, such as yellowfin tuna, thereby helping ensure productive commercial harvests outside monument waters in the years to come;

WHEREAS

Since the Monument and other Pacific monuments were expanded, NOAA Fisheries catch data demonstrates that the Hawai'i-based longline fleet achieved its annual bigeye tuna quota without access to the Pacific monument waters that are closed to them;

WHEREAS

A growing body of scientific evidence indicates that large marine protected areas are highly likely to increase the resilience of marine species to catastrophic events, including climate change;

WHEREAS

NOAA Fisheries' Climate Science Strategy reports that as a result of global warming, Pacific Island waters are expected to experience major changes, including increased temperatures, increased acidity, changes in currents, and lower productivity, and it concludes that these changes will impact the ecosystem trophic structure, biomass, and catch for the Hawai'i longline fishery, with the fishery's yield projected to decline significantly after 2050;

WHEREAS

The Monument and other marine national monuments in the Pacific promote ecosystem resilience and adaptation to changing environmental conditions resulting from global warming and are large-scale living laboratories that can help scientists better understand climate-related impacts on ocean ecosystems;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council strongly supports continued and strengthened conservation measures for all resources within the current boundaries of the Monument and other marine national monuments in the Pacific, and these should not be diminished by any actions under Executive Order 13921;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a diverse mix of parties and interests recognizes the global significance of the Monument and other marine national monuments in the Pacific and continues to fully support the innovative management systems that provide integrated effective decision making to sustain their unique and diverse resources;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all agencies managing the Monument and other marine national monuments in the Pacific shall continue to observe the precautionary principle when determining resource management measures if there is uncertainty about the impacts of an action;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the current boundaries of the Monument and other marine national monuments in the Pacific encompass the minimal areas needed to ensure the continuance and integrity of the species, habitats and ecosystems they protect and these boundaries should not be changed by Executive Order 13921;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that management of the Monument shall continue undiminished with the evolving federal and state conservation and management measures that have protected the natural ecosystems of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument for more than 110 years.

ADOPTED by the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council during a virtual meeting on August 20, 2020.



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William Aila Jr., Chair