



PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA
Marine National Monument

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**Historic WWII Murals Arrive in Honolulu from
Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge**

(Honolulu, HI) In a major historic preservation effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, six wall-sized original paintings that formerly hung in a World War II-era theater on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, arrived by ship today in Honolulu, HI. The murals will be on loan for at least four years to the Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor, preserving and making them available for the general public to enjoy for the first time in their history.

“Being a Navy veteran myself, I am excited they will be in a venue at Pearl Harbor that tells the story of World War II in the Pacific. Now, thousands of people will be able to enjoy the murals each year,” said Refuge manager Sue Schulmeister.

The eight by twelve foot murals depict scenes symbolic of U.S. involvement in World War II and covered the walls in the theatre on the island. They were painted by Victor Nels Solander, 123rd U.S. Naval Construction Battalion, whose Seabee unit was stationed on Midway from June 1, 1944 to December 16, 1945. Solander was awarded a \$100.00 war bond and his work received many accolades at the time.

“As I watched the increasing deterioration of the theater walls and ceiling in the few years that I have lived here – I knew we would soon lose these beautiful paintings if we could not relocate them to a more stable environment, said Schulmeister. “Extracting the eight by twelve foot murals from the walls of the theater was a herculean effort on a remote island with few resources. To carefully preserve the original artwork took a year of research and planning with input from Service historians, engineers and the few staff at hand.”

Although these murals are not on the National Register of Historic Places, they have both artistic and historic value and carry great symbolism to veterans and anyone who has been fortunate enough to walk into the historic theatre on Midway. In the post-WWII era the theatre was the entertainment mecca for thousands of military members and their families once stationed there.

The Service is proud to lead this effort, but it would not have been possible without the skill of Defense Base Services, Incorporated, who removed and crated the murals, and the support and commitment of Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor.

“The history of World War II is written not just in words but in images. And that includes artwork that was painted in the far flung outposts of the war. These need to be preserved for future generations,” notes Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor curator, Burl Burlingame.

The murals will enhance the museum’s current Battle of Midway exhibits and be readied as soon as possible for viewing by the public.





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Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge is located approximately 1,150 nautical miles northwest of Honolulu in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Considered one of most pivotal naval battles in the world, Midway was command central for the Battle of Midway in World War II. To honor the sacrifice and courage of the men who fought in this battle, Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge was designated the Battle of Midway National Memorial by Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3217 in 2000. The Service honors the rich military and cultural history of Midway Atoll, while focusing on its mission of conserving wildlife for the continuing and future benefit of the American people.

For mural photos, and to learn more about Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, please visit: <http://usfwspacific.tumblr.com/post/55039880702/stemming-the-tide-of-time-and-saving-murals-at-midway>.

To learn more about the Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor, please visit: <http://www.pacificaviationmuseum.org>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov. Connect with our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usfws, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwshq, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws> and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwshq>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service carried out the mural translocation project at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, which is located in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and World Heritage Site. While the management of Papahānaumokuākea is carried out jointly by various agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the National Wildlife Refuges within its boundaries.

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations. Three co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai'i - joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was inscribed as the first mixed (natural and cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Site in the United States in July 2010. For more information, please visit www.papahanaumokuakea.gov.

