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Information / thoughts for RAC discussion

1 message

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To: pmnm.rac@noaa.gov

Tue, Jun 7, 2016 at 9:13 AM

Aloha Kakahiaka.

I just want to share a little bit of information with you all before the meeting tomorrow -- it looks like there will be a lot of information, people too.

I'm glad we were able to approve the motion to write a letter to NOAA expressing our support for the Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group's proposed expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM) at the last meeting. We were a bit rushed for time, and may be again on Wednesday given the multiple issues, so here are some things I wanted to explain, from my perspective.

1. First, I believe it's clear we should support the Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group's proposed boundary, to the full 200 mile EEZ (except along the southern edge, so the line will not move closer to Kaua'i and Ni'ihau). There are so many important reasons to extend the line as far as possible, to promote Native Hawaiian culture and proposals, protect our amazing natural resources and invest in future generations. The science of marine protected areas is well studied, and is accepted science (except maybe not by WESPAC) -- protected areas lead to more fish, bigger fish, more fish biomass, and protect more biodiversity. That's why so many countries have been and continue to create marine protected areas.

As I outline below, there is no reason to accommodate the longline fisheries because they are not losing anything (there may be a small inconvenience but there will likely be a positive economic effect because they are quota based and the fish will be easier to catch in the future).

2. For Middle Bank, the Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group (NHCWG) proposal held the boundary line at that southern edge for a variety of reasons, including the potential challenges and controversy for our local, small boat fishermen and the longline fishing industry. I saw the recent report but not clear evidence as to why the boundary should be shifted to better protect Middle Bank resources. However, I'm open to considering that proposal if it accommodates the small boat fishermen. I see no reason we would suggest a trade off for anything, we should just state our position.

3. As I said, I'm not interested in accommodating the longline fishermen, in part because their fishing practices decimate our resources, but primarily because the expansion will not negatively effect their bottom line. This fishery is a quota-based system (not place-based) and it is not changing whatsoever. The only harm the commercial fishing, longline industry could truthfully claim is inconvenience, as they will need to shift a very small amount of their fishing activities from one area (where they barely fish) to another area (where they already fish about 95% of the time). At the end of the day, the theory of protecting this area is there will be habitat to allow for more, bigger and better fish, which will not stay within the PMNM boundary, so the longline fishermen actually will benefit due to spillover, at least in the medium and long run.

4. For the potential Reserve/Sanctuary overlay, this is not part of the Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group's proposal but I understand how some members may want to discuss adding this to our letter supporting expansion, potentially including an

additional request for the President to consider. This seems like the most complex issue for us to discuss, so hopefully we will have time to fully consider the options.

5. As I indicated during our straw poll, I support OHA as the fourth co-trustee. FYI, OHA voted to support the expansion of the PMNM at its recent meeting with 3 conditions: "OHA is elevated to a Co-Trustee position; the cultural significance of the expansion area to Native Hawaiians is recognized; and there is no boundary expansion southeast towards the islands of Ni'ihau and Kaua'i."

6. Lastly, and not included on our agenda, is a proposed exception to the Monument boundary for small boat fishermen to be able to use two weather buoys as fish aggregation devices that are northeast of Kaua'i. I support this part of the proposal and just want to make sure we have a chance to discuss it, if possible and/or necessary. It is a key issue for many local fishermen. I believe it is now part of the NHCWG proposal, so perhaps if we support their proposal in full, we don't need to add in this issue or have the discussion at Wednesday's meeting.

All in all, fully supporting the proposed expansion of PMNM is simple in my mind – it's been well thought out, justified, adjusted and recommended by our NHCWG (and now, many other groups, organizations, leaders and individuals) The Reserve/Sanctuary issue is a little more complex but if we take a position, this would be an ideal time to do it.

I look forward to the discussion and seeing you all soon.

Aloha,

Jessica