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### **Testimony**

House Committee on Natural Resources

Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans

Oversight Hearing: Examining the Creation and Management of Marine Monuments and Sanctuaries

**March 15, 2017, 10 AM, 1324 Longworth House Office Bldg.**

Honorable Members of the Sub-Committee on Water, Power and Oceans:

The 110-year history of the creation and implementation of protections for the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, by Presidential Executive Order, has always been based on the need to conserve the unique resources of this remote chain of islands in the Central Pacific.

Republican President Theodore Roosevelt first ordered protections in 1906, when a soaring demand for feathers for ladies hats was clearly going to decimate important nesting colonies of several species of seabirds.

Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama ordered additional protections over the next century-plus to assure that the wildlife, cultural assets and historical sites in this unique and isolated chain of islands, were adequately protected. That's a bi-partisan mix of three Republican Presidents and three Democratic Presidents who saw the need to build on a long history of protections, and opted to implement those protections by way of an Executive Order.

In recent years, these Presidential Executive Orders were definitely not issued in a vacuum. Extensive public processes were undertaken by the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations to gather public opinion and ideas on how best to assure that the unique natural, cultural and historic assets of Northwest Hawaiian Islands were preserved, while minimizing the impact of expanded protections on the small number of fishermen, cultural practitioners, educators, and researchers who visit these waters annually.

Not only were the vast majority of the tens of thousands of individuals who provided input to the process, in favor of each of the proposed Executive Orders, but the Northwest Hawaiian Islands were recently recognized for their unique natural resources, cultural and historic importance, when they were declared a World Heritage Site by the IUCN.

Bottomline: the creation of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern

Hawaiian Islands has happened incrementally over more than a century, with bi-partisan presidents adding protections as needed, and extensive public processes assuring that community input was considered. There is no reason to alter the status quo here.

A small group of commercial fishing boat owners in Hawaii, and the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council that they dominate, have asked President Trump to act against this history of well-reasoned actions, and are seeking the support of your committee.

Before considering supporting their shortsighted and self-serving request, consider that the history of fishing these waters has often been as exploitative as the original decimation of seabird colonies for feathers, that was stopped by order of President Teddy Roosevelt.

After World War II an insatiable demand for fresh seafood for the burgeoning tourist industry, and local consumption for the growing population in Hawaii, led one Hawaiian commercial fisherman to begin flying transport aircraft to French Frigate Shoals in the middle of the Northwest Hawaii Islands, to return tons fish to the Honolulu fish markets. Captain Buzzy Agard quickly learned that the unsullied, highly-productive fishery resource he had begun harvesting intensively, was quickly becoming less and less productive. Eventually Buzzy Agard walked away from a valuable fishery, and became an uncompromising advocate for further protections for the Northwest Hawaiian Islands.

In the 1970's, the spiny lobster fishery in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands was deemed to be so endlessly productive and economically valuable that a new combination fishing/processing vessel was built with support from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's fishing vessel loan program, to exploit that lobster fishery. Within a few years it was clear the 1000-mile Northwest Hawaiian Islands could not support this level of harvesting effort, and the lobster fishery collapsed. For the record, the lobster population in these remote islands has never recovered.

Those who argue for their "right" to exploit the tuna and swordfish that transit the Marine National Monument around the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, with industrial longliners, will not tell you that historically, less than 10% of their annual harvest comes from the area within the US Exclusive Economic Zone (American's 200-mile limit). Nor will they tell you that one of their prime target species, Bigeye tuna, are considered to be over-fished in the Pacific, and that they caught all of their year-long quota by July of last year. Most certainly they will not remind you that the crew who work on their fishing vessels are virtually all foreign nationals, often working in slave-like conditions.

In other words, the most recent expansion of the Papahānumoʻokuākea Marine National Monument, by President Obama, will have almost no impact on Hawaii fisheries, other than to provide a productive sanctuary that assures the replenishment of numerous species of fish and other marine organisms, many of which have commercial importance and can and will be caught outside the Monument's boundaries, as well as many that are endemic, including an increasing number of species totally new to science, some of which could have medical and other benefits for human-kind.

Each of the national marine sanctuaries and national marine monuments in America's system of marine protected areas was created for a different reason, employing an array of different methodologies, involving a cross section of the communities that live closest to area being protected. It would be extremely short-sighted to reverse a 110 year history of protections for the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, that were proscribed by a half-dozen US Presidents, on a whim, much less based on the false pretenses of a longline fishery that doesn't even employ Americans.

Overall, millions of Americans have participated in the process of creating America's marine protected areas, its national marine monuments and national marine sanctuaries. Marine scientists tell us that in order to assure healthy marine resources for America's future we must expand the number and size of the marine protected areas in US waters. Whether we do that by Presidential Executive Order, congressional authorization or some other public process, we must go in that direction if we are to assure a future for America's fisheries, our economy and coastal communities.

Sincerely yours,



Rick, Gaffney, President