

NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESERVE  
**RESERVE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Non-Government (Voting)**

Linda Paul (Chair)  
Conservation

Rick Gaffney (Vice Chair)  
Recreational Fishing

Pelika Andrade  
Native Hawaiian

Kalama'ehu Takahashi  
Native Hawaiian

Nakoa Goo  
Native Hawaiian Alternate

Solomon Pili Kaho'ohalahala  
Native Hawaiian Elder

Audrey Newman  
Conservation

Samuel 'Ohu Gon III  
Conservation

Robert Leinau  
Conservation Alternate

Doug Fetterly  
Conservation Alternate

Thorne Abbott  
Conservation Alternate

Don Schug  
Research

Haunani Kane  
Research

Mark Hixon  
Research

Neal Langerman  
Research Alternate

William Walsh  
Research Alternate

Richard Lee  
Ocean-Related Tourism

Paul Badgley  
Ocean-Related Tourism Alternate

Bonnie Kahapea-Tanner  
Education

Heather Howard  
Education Alternate

Judith Cucco  
Citizen-at-Large

Kammie Dominique-Tavares  
Citizen-at-Large Alternate

Vacant  
Commercial Fishing  
Commercial Fishing Alternate  
Native Hawaiian Elder Alternate  
State of Hawaii

**Government (Non-Voting)**

Eric Roberts  
Papahānaumokuākea MNL

Kim Hum  
HWM National Marine Sanctuary

Malia Chow  
NOAA Fisheries PWR

Brandon Jim On  
NOAA Office of Law Enforcement

Maile Norman  
U.S. Coast Guard

Joshua DeMello  
WPRFMC

Jared Underwood  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Brian Neilson  
Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources

Kealoha Pisciotta  
Office of Hawaiian Affairs

Vacant  
Marine Mammal Commission  
U.S. Department of Defense

April 19, 2023  
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
NOAA Daniel K. Inouye Regional Center  
1845 Wasp Blvd, Honolulu, HI 96818  
and  
Via Google Meet Teleconference  
Meeting Minutes

**ATTENDEES:**

**RAC Voting Members Present:** Audrey Newman (Conservation), Don Schug (Research), Mark Hixon (Research), Rick Gaffney (Vice Chair and Recreational Fishing), Linda Paul (Chair and Conservation), Judith Cucco (Citizen-At-Large), Samuel 'Ohu Gon III (Conservation), Solomon Kaho'ohalahala (Native Hawaiian Elder Primary), and Richard Lee (Ocean-Related Tourism)

**RAC Voting Members Absent:** Haunani Kane (Research), Pelika Andrade (Native Hawaiian), Haunani Kane (Research), Holden Kalama'ehu Takahashi (Native Hawaiian), and Bonnie Kahapea-Tanner (Education Primary)

**RAC Non-Voting Members Present:** Nakoa Goo (Native Hawaiian alternate), Doug Fetterly (Conservation alternate), Thorne Abbott (Conservation alternate), Kammie Dominique-Tavares (Citizen-at-Large alternate), Neal Langerman (Research alternate), Rick Hoo (Recreational Fishing alternate), William Walsh (Research alternate), Brian Neilson (DLNR-DAR), Joshua DeMello (WPRFMC), Ivan Vicente (FWS), Maile Norman (US Coast Guard), Kaipo Perez (NOAA PIRO), and Michelle Smith (DLNR-DOFAW)

**RAC Non-Voting Members Absent:** Paul Badgley (Ocean-Related Tourism alternate), Heather Howard (Education alternate), Roberts Leinau (Conservation alternate), Brandon Jim On (NOAA OLE), Kimberly Kealoha Pisciotta (OHA), Jared Underwood (FWS Refuges), Dan Polhemus (USFWS)

**ONMS Staff and Others Present:** Eric Roberts (ONMS-PMNM), Alyssa Miller (ONMS-PMNM), Kilo Ka'awa-Gonzales (ONMS-PMNM), Kanoe Morishige (ONMS-PMNM), Malia Evans (ONMS-PMNM), Alan Lum (ONMS-PMNM), Kahi Fuji (ONMS-PMNM), Keolohilani Lopes (ONMS-PMNM), Marc Lammers (ONMS-HIHWNMS), and Scott Shaffer (San Jose State University)

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**Welcome (Chair Paul)**

- Opening protocol was conducted by Kanoe Morishige and staff.
- Introductions/Roll Call
- Agenda Approved with one addition: deep sea mining impacts discussion [Shug moved, Cucco seconded]
- Meeting Minutes of January 18th approved: [Cucco moved, Gon seconded]

**Monument Co-Trustee/Management Agency Updates/Highlights**

- NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (Eric Roberts).
  - See PPT presentation. Highlights include:
    - Over 2,000 visitors at MDC since January
    - About 1,200 visitors to the robotics center
    - A lot of interest in our MegaLab exhibit
    - Life Sciences Building at UH named for former RAC representative, Dr. Isabella Abbott
    - Currently preparing for 3 marine research cruises this summer: *Chondria tumulosa* research; coral reef monitoring; NMSAS Characterization of species
    - Agency coordination - Roberts and several ONMS staff attended IMPAC 5 and the 10th Big Ocean Network meeting; a Sister Site Agreement with Rapa Nui is moving forward
    - Roberts attended Annual Sanctuary Superintendent's Team Meeting
    - World Heritage Day April 18, 2023. PMNM recognition by UNESCO included video clips.
    - Upcoming:
      - Daniel Wagner, OET, presentation on upcoming deep sea research (virtual talk 4/19)
      - Bishop Museum Science & Sustainability Festival 4/22
      - Get Into Your Sanctuary Celebration 7/22
- NOAA Fisheries PIRO and Science Center (Kaipo Perez)
  - See written report. Highlights:
    - UNESCO World Heritage Site reporting
    - Protected Species Program: 3 rehabilitated HMS were released at Pihemanu; staffing for field camps in progress. May HGT and HMS crews at Lalo through Sept 2023. Two rehabbed HMS will be released. ARC to cover Kamole, Manawai and Kapou; developing Olelo Hawai'i with Kamehameha Schools.
    - Turtle and Marine program also staging camps; May 10-19 deploy at Lalo 3 teams of turtle through September 2023 alongside HMS crew. Annual report should be available next month. Int'l sea turtle symposium in Colombia attended. Planned assessment survey summer and fall in 19 areas.
- USFWS Refuges (Ivan Vicente)
  - See PPT presentation. Highlights

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- Midway Seabird Protection Project kicked off at the end of January. Over 900 LAYDU translocated to Eastern Island. Helicopter arrives next week, bait being prepared for distro in June. Will bring in veterinarians to help manage LAYDU.
- Short Tailed Albatross status now 6 individuals at Midway, including chicks hatched at Midway that have returned.
- Hawaiian Monk Seals - three rehabbed seals were released.
- *Cenchrus echinatus* eradication crew returned from Nihoa last week. Next trip in September.
- Summer field season: trip planed to Kamole in May (treating *C. echinatus*) No camps in HIHNRW this summer due to focus on Midway Seabird Protection project.
- Staff changes: Stewart Cogswell will be interim acting Midway Manager until June. New Refuge Mgr to be hired and start in June.
- Eldridge Naboa moved to Hakalau
- Steve Barklay is retiring on May 31st
- Honoring Rob Shallenberger, former Midway Manager, who recently passed away
- USFWS Ecological Services (See written update)
- State of Hawai‘i DLNR-DAR -No report
- State of Hawai‘i DLNR-DOFAW (Cynthia Vanderlip)
  - See PPT presentation: Highlights of State Seabird Sanctuary management include:
    - Invasive species control- *Verbesina encelioides* work continues. Big headed ant control has been successful, protecting the endangered Popolo (*Solanum nelsonii*)
    - Seabird monitoring and management continues
    - Habitat improvement project: breaking up old runway to prevent ponding and create new habitat.
    - 24 Laysan ducks (LAYDU) translocated from Midway to Kure are doing well; population is currently around 100. Proposed strategies: test out botulism vaccine; use detection dog to find infected or dead birds; continue to improve foraging habitat, increase and test new types of water sources; continue to use Laysan and Midway stock to augment genome
    - Annual albatross nest and fledgeling counts. 2023 lowest count for BFAL since 2010, likely due to storms destroying nests, and possibly due to bycatch. This fall will participate in geolocator-tagging program to track movement.
    - Marine debris removal continues 10-15K lbs removed annually.
    - Currently recruiting volunteers for the 2023 field season at Green Island, beginning in October. Details at [Kureatollconservancy.org](http://Kureatollconservancy.org)
- Office of Hawaiian Affairs (Kealoha Pisciotta)
  - Broad scale ocean protection advocacy
  - Permitting support
  - Coordinating CWG

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**Supporting Agency Updates/Highlights**

- US Coast Guard- Enforcement (Maile Norman)
  - See Written Report. Highlights include:
    - Transported 6 Hawaiian monk seals from Kauai to Kona.
    - Assisted with the search for 1 humpback whale calf.
    - Operation Kohola Guardian is an intensive effort to monitor and protect humpback whales in Hawaii January-March.
    - Operation ‘Aiga: 8,616 nautical-mile patrol, USCG cutter conducted operations to counter illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU)
- Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (Josh Demello)
  - Fishing Regulations: At its 194th meeting in March, the Council amended its recommendations for the proposed MEA fishing regulations. The amendments removed allowance of sale and a \$15K cost recovery threshold. Added to the regulations was the opportunity for cost recovery for qualified parties via WPRFMC community programs. Proposed regulations are currently being reviewed by NOAA, and a response is expected in a month.

**Presentations**

- Humpback Whale Presence Across the Hawaiian Archipelago (Marc Lammers)
  - See PPT presentation. Highlights include:
    - New evidence that Hawaii whales do feed while in the Hawai‘i archipelago.
    - Are HBW subject to industrial whaling. Intl ban on harvesting, but some illegal harvesting may be happening
    - Predation - tiger sharks in Maui Nui. but most predation probably by orca in more Northern waters
- Characterizing the Occurrence and Drivers of Hawaiian Albatross Encounters with Fishing Vessels (Scott Shaffer)
  - See PPT presentation. Highlights include:
    - Have been conducting fieldwork on foraging ecology of albatross in PMNM since 2002.
    - 31 peer reviewed papers to date. Nearly all data are publicly available.
    - Objectives of current project are:
      - Albatross surveillance and assessment of mechanisms that drive albatross-vessel interactions of BFAL and LAYAL.
      - Assess the effectiveness of long line night setting as a preventive measure for bycatch;  
Quantify fishing pressure along the PMNM boundary and determine if there is a PMNM edge effect influencing albatross interaction;

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- Propose bycatch mitigation options informed by this analysis, and evaluate their implementation feasibility and effectiveness.
  - Radar-tagged albatrosses provide real-time data. Project analyzes seabird interaction data viz Global Fishing Watch data on fishing vessels.
  - Distribution of birds provides info on distribution relative to environmental conditions, annual reproductive success and population vital rates.
  - Radar tags provide information on bird-vessel encounters across the North Pacific, including on the high seas
  - Cost effective technology- can survey a large area for low investment.
  - Working on smaller tags.

**Public Comment**

There was one pre-registered public comment that was submitted to be read aloud.

- Richard Duggan:
  - I was the chairman of exhibits at the Bishop Museum from 1994-2000 where I learned much about Hawaiian culture through the many exhibits we developed in-house. In 2000 I started the development, design and production of exhibits for the Education Center at Hanauma Bay, Hawaii's first MLCDD. After it opened I immediately started working on Mokupapapa Coral Reef Discovery Center with associates in Boston, developing and designing its exhibits and bi-lingual graphics. I also managed the construction and installation of the exhibits on-site and continued working with NOAA on many projects for over 15 years. Over these years I've gotten to work with some of the most professional, educated, multi-talented people I've ever had the pleasure to work with. NOAA is a collaborative community of specialists and generalists from many fields that have coalesced into a deep body of knowledge, old and new, cultural and scientific, of this magnificent archipelago. When the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve was founded it was 134,500 square miles of the Pacific Ocean, islands and atolls – an area larger than all of the National Parks combined. Today Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is a World Heritage site encompassing 583,000 square miles of reserve to ensure comprehensive protection of this vast, wild remote region. This is an incredible accomplishment that was only won through the hard and patient work of many people dedicated to the understanding and conservation of the particularly unique ecosystem. NOAA is doing an extraordinary job of continuing to protect the PMNM from exploitation and protecting the sacred cultural sites scattered throughout. I was recently heartened to read that the regulations are being tightened on subsistence fishing in the monument expansion area under a permit for Native Hawaiian practices. Those principles are spelled out in Mai Ka Po Mai, a document developed through years of discussion with the Hawaiian community. Representative Ed Case is a strong opponent of fishing in PMNM and a strong

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supporter of Hawaiian culture. In a letter to NOAA, Case described the customary exchange idea proposed by WESPAC as a “dangerous, industry-led proposal to expand Monument extraction thinly veiled as a purported cultural practice.” I totally agree. NOAA Administration Assistant Administrator Nicole LeBoeuf’s response to WESPAC was succinct, clear and to the point. Exploitation in any way is verboten. I agree. I applaud the efforts of all of you to ensure that PMNM stays wild, un-commercialized and protected from damage by the unnatural greed of our age. Future generations will thank you for your foresight in helping to preserve our vanishing species.

- Chair Paul called for public comments on the call and one additional comment was made.
  - Tammy Harp
    - Be mindful of those who oppose or resist the PRI initiative. Potential upcoming deep sea mining impacts are of great concern. The SpaceX re-entry in Hawaiian waters that is scheduled for tomorrow is also of concern.  
(<https://www.space.com/spacex-starship-first-orbital-launch-explainer>), There is concern about potential impacts from the debris field around Kaua‘i and NWHI. Splash down is expected to happen about 60 miles off the northwest coast of Kaua‘i.

### **Council Discussion**

- Charter Extension- RAC will seek a 2-year extension. (Catherine Takata)
- Proposed Sanctuary Designation Process Update (Eric Roberts).
  - Estimated timeline for public comment period on the Draft sanctuary package is fall 2023. Goal is to hold a workshop with the RAC during the public comment period to provide information and determine whether the RAC will provide group comment.
  - Discussion on Proposed Pacific Remote Islands NMS designation. Sol Kaho‘ohalahala recommended that those on the RAC who want to support can join the PRI designation working group discussions. Public scoping meetings for the PRI designation will be held in May. Future RAC meetings will agendaize this item.
- Kūpuna Council Working Group Update (Rick Gaffney)
  - Working group is being formulated, workplan will be developed.
- Deep Sea Mining (Representative Kaho‘ohalahala)
  - Deep sea mining issue brief 2023: International Deep Sea Authority is making key policy decisions about deep sea extraction. The U.S. does not participate in this body.
  - DSA does not consider there is any cultural connection to the high seas.
  - Multitude of countries proposing to conduct mining in Clarion-Clipperton zone. It is a vast zone. Proposed mining process, including extraction and dumping of waste, is highly destructive. The ecology, and the extent and time frame of impacts all are unknown. Intangible cultural heritage is also at risk.
  - Now is the time to address Native Hawaiian and other indigenous world view concerns about this activity. International indigenous group is weighing in

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directly with the DSA, which per Nauru petition, has had 2 years to formulate rules about extraction. If they fail to formulate policy, the region is effectively an open commons for all nations to commence mining. The deadline is in July.

- Representative Gon shared [IUCN Resolution on seabed mining](#) which states: ‘IUCN Member States, civil society and Indigenous organizations overwhelmingly voted in support of a moratorium on deep seabed mining to protect life in the ocean.’ OHA Representative Pisciotta shared Pacific people’s recent efforts to protect biodiversity.
- Representative Newman suggested approaching Senators/Congressional Representatives, or the White House, to get this on the U.S. radar.
- Representative Hixon noted: There is new evidence that the Stony Coral Tissue Loss disease microbe that has devastated reefs in the Caribbean region could potentially reach the Pacific in/on contaminated vessels. Hawai‘i is completely unprepared. This is another red flag issue for the RAC and PMNM management. I will send information to Cat to distribute.

**Decision Making, Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks**

- Apply for charter extension: RAC approved the proposal to apply for a 2 year charter extension, in order to provide time for a thorough review process
- Next RAC meeting will be virtual, date TBD by RAC leadership
- Proposed in-person meeting during the sanctuary designation public comment period, likely Fall 2023