

# Expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument: *Economic and Ecological Balance*

Photo Credit: Kydd Pollock TNC

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) can provide enormous benefits to ecosystems, biodiversity, communities, fisheries and economies, and other areas have shown that successful fisheries and MPAs can co-exist. While fishing in the Pacific Remote Islands' (PRI) exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is minimal, recent studies suggest that monument designations have not harmed, but likely benefited U.S. fisheries.

## Meeting Quota

Currently, there is little fishing activity in the waters proposed for expanded protection. The longliners have exhausted their quota every year since the PRI boundaries were expanded in 2014, and a tiny fraction of the Hawaii longline fishing effort comes from the area. The area accounts for less than 5% of effort and catch for the purse seine fleet. In four of the last six years, the area accounted for less than 0.5% of purse seine effort.

Historically, the waters surrounding PRI were lightly fished by commercial fishers. Before 2014, the catch from these waters accounted for less than 5% of the longliners' total annual harvest according to WESPAC's 2013 annual report.

## Case Study: Spillover Effects

New research from MPAs around the world has shown signs of positive spillover effects that benefit nearby fisheries. For instance, findings from the Galápagos have shown that the iconic Galápagos Marine Reserve has had a positive impact on the productivity of yellowfin and skipjack tuna fisheries, proving that large pelagic MPAs can have a positive effect on these highly migratory species. Expanding protection to open waters around PRI could have a similar effect on these species.



Photo Credit: Kydd Pollock TNC

## Risks of Deep-sea Mining

While there is no current deep-sea mining around PRI, mining interests have identified PRI's waters as a high value, and therefore high interest area. Deep-sea mining for increasingly difficult-to-find minerals poses a potential profit opportunity for a select few, while inflicting damage to the environment as well as to fisheries that depend on healthy and abundant fish stocks—damage that would impact generations to come. Deep-sea mining involves complete removal of the top layer of sediment, resulting in total mortality of deep-sea benthic organisms and the creation of toxic wastewater tailings with widespread impacts on mid-water pelagic communities, including tuna. Expanding protection now will ensure that this scenario will not occur in the future.



Deep-sea mining poses a threat to fisheries and ecosystems alike.

Photo Credit: Nautilus Minerals

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