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**NATIVE HAWAIIAN LEADERS HONORED FOR THEIR WORK WITH
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES AND MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENTS**

*Pacific Remote Islands Coalition members Solomon Pili Kaho'ohalahala and William Ailā, Jr.
receive Sanctuary Wavemaker Award*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Two Native Hawaiian leaders and longtime members of the Pacific Remote Islands (PRI) Coalition were honored for championing protections for our oceans and advocating for environmental justice. The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation presented Solomon Pili Kaho'ohalahala and William Ailā, Jr. with the Sanctuary Wavemaker Award in the Ronald Reagan Building atrium in Washington, D.C. this week, on World Oceans Day.

"We are truly grateful and honored to be recognized for the strides that have been taken to protect our waters," said Ailā, Jr. "As a fisherman and Native Hawaiian, I feel a deep connection to the ocean. It brought our ancestors home and sustained our people for generations. It is why we must continue to fight to protect our ocean and the lifeforms that call it home."

"Hawaiians have long been on the forefront of conservation and resource management," said Kaho'ohalahala. "This award demonstrates that our efforts in promoting Indigenous knowledge is key to protect our ocean and its finite resources. It's time we expand on our efforts to preserve our waters until it is too late."

The Sanctuary Wavemaker Award recognizes the dedication of citizens conducting critical work that benefits national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments, and are active advocates and ambassadors for national marine sanctuaries. Both Ailā, Jr. and Kaho'ohalahala have long been involved in Indigenous and community-based conservation management, and the creation of the Papahānaumokuākea and PRI national monuments. Traditional Hawaiian values are key to how the pair work, lead, and live.

"The kumulipo (Hawaiian creation chant) shows us that our connection to the ocean goes back to the beginning of time," said Kaho'ohalahala. "It is not only our responsibility to care for her; it is our promise to provide a resource for future generations."

Both Kaho'ohalahala and Ailā, Jr. are members of the PRI Coalition, advocating for a new national marine sanctuary that encompasses the current PRI marine national monument and expands to the full limit (200 nautical miles) of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around Howland and Baker Islands and Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll. The proposed national marine sanctuary would conserve about 777,000 square miles of highly protected waters and create the world's largest marine protected area. Under a proposal from the PRI Coalition, creation of the new marine sanctuary would also give Indigenous Pacific Islanders a place at the decision-making table when it comes to co-management and re-naming the area, as well as honor the service, sacrifice and significance of the Hui Panalā'au.

Congressman Ed Case (D-HI), who has supported the PRI Coalition's efforts, and Congressman Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) also received the Leadership Award, which honors political leaders who demonstrate a commitment to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes stewardship.

To learn more about the honorees, click [here](#). Photos can be found [here](#).

Please courtesy: PRI Coalition

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About the Pacific Remote Islands Coalition

In 2014, the Pacific Remote Islands Coalition formed to protect the cultural, natural, and historical legacy of these special islands, atolls, and reefs. Our diverse network includes elders, fishers, educators, cultural practitioners, non-profits, community groups, scientists, religious organizations, veterans, and many others across the Pacific and beyond. We are a coalition brought together by a love for the ocean that connects and sustains us. Learn more at protectpri.com.