



**MEDIA CONTACT**

Honey Maltin-Wisot  
[protectPRI@gmail.com](mailto:protectPRI@gmail.com)  
(808) 445-0696

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEW REPORT SUGGESTS EXPANDING PROTECTIONS IN AND AROUND THE PACIFIC REMOTE ISLANDS HAS VIRTUALLY NO EFFECT ON INDUSTRIAL FISHING**

HONOLULU, HAWAI'I — [A new study](#) shows, despite claims otherwise, industrial fishing is not likely to be impacted by expanded protections around the Pacific Remote Islands (PRI). A team of interdisciplinary scientists at the Environmental Markets Lab (emLab) at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) used publicly available AIS vessel monitoring data from Global Fishing Watch (GFW) and catch data reported by the Western & Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to analyze current and historical fishing dynamics in and around the PRI.

Findings demonstrate that virtually no industrial fishing is taking place in the area of a new marine national sanctuary in the region, as proposed by the PRI Coalition. These findings strongly suggest that if implemented, the new sanctuary would likely have little, if any, effect on fishing effort or catch, and would not impact existing practices of the industrial scale U.S. purse seine fleet and cannery based in American Samoa. The data shows that from 2013-2022:

- The U.S. purse seine and U.S. longline fleets spent less than half of a percent of their fishing effort inside the proposed protected area.
- Catch data reported by WCPFC shows a tenth of a percent of the U.S. purse seine fleet catch came from within the proposed sanctuary area.
- U.S. purse seine vessels landing in Pago Pago Harbor, American Samoa only spent 2.65% of their total fishing effort in the proposed sanctuary area.
- U.S. longline vessels landing in Pago Pago Harbor spent 0% of their total effort in the proposed sanctuary area.

Further, over the last five years, almost 94% of fishing effort by the U.S. purse seine fleet landing in Pago Pago occurs in the high seas or within non-U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). More than 98% of the U.S. longline fleet's effort landing in Pago Pago primarily occurs within the American Samoa EEZ area.

[Another study](#), published in *Science* magazine, shows that marine protected areas can actually improve fishing beyond their boundaries. According to that report, tuna fisheries near Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument have experienced a 54% increase in catch since the monument was expanded in 2016 because of spillover of healthy tuna populations within the protected area.

“These studies show that marine protected areas work,” said PRI Coalition member Rick Gaffney. “The fishing industry should embrace these marine protected areas because the science and numbers show that they help, not hinder, their fishing efforts.”

The proposed sanctuary would encompass the existing Pacific Remote Islands and extend to the full limit of the U.S. EEZ (200 nautical miles) around Howland and Baker Islands and Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll. It would conserve 777,000 square miles, creating the world’s largest protected ocean area with the goal of not only protecting the rare marine life forms in and around the PRI, but also preserving and perpetuating the cultural and historic significance of the area for so many Indigenous Pacific Islanders.

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) is currently seeking public comments as it considers whether to designate a national marine sanctuary in and around the PRI. The nomination calls for the sanctuary area to honor the cultural and historical legacy of these islands and atolls, preserve the area as an intact cultural voyaging seascape, and protect abundant populations of wildlife such as coral, fish, sharks, turtles, rays, whales, dolphins, birds, and other important marine ocean species in the face of threats like deep-sea mining, and climate change, and large-scale industrial fishing.

The next in-person meeting will take place in Pago Pago, American Samoa on May 24. Two additional virtual meetings have been scheduled on May 25/26 and May 31/June 1, depending on the time zone. **Public comments will be accepted virtually, online, or by mail through June 2, 2023.** Additional information on upcoming meeting locations and how to submit comments online or by mail, can be found [here](#).

For more information, visit [protectPRI.com](https://protectPRI.com).

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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.