



NEWS RELEASE

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Maui Mayor Announces Support for Protecting the Pacific Remote Islands

KAHULUI, HAWAI'I—Mayor Michael Victorino of Maui released a letter to the White House, asking President Joe Biden to use his authority to expand protection of the waters around the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM).

Made up of cultural practitioners, scientists, conservationists, fishers, and community members from across the Pacific, the Pacific Remote Islands Coalition is working together toward protecting the precious ocean waters of the PRI. In a request sent on May 31 to President Joe Biden, the Coalition asked the administration to visit their respective Pacific Islands to hear from stakeholders.

The proposed expansion would extend the monument around two sets of islands and atolls from 50 to 200 nautical miles, the full extent of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), making the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument the largest highly protected marine protected area (MPA) in the world. The PRI Marine National Monument was originally established in 2009 by President George W. Bush and expanded in 2014 by President Barack Obama under the Antiquities Act. The remaining areas needing full protection now are the waters surrounding Howard and Baker Islands, and Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll. Many in the Coalition have been advocating for full protection since 2014.

In his letter, Mayor Victorino made the following statement in support of expansion:

“As Mayor of Maui County, I know that the health of our ocean and the health of our islands are deeply intertwined. I have seen firsthand how manmade threats such as over-extraction, pollution, and climate change are impacting communities that rely on the ocean to sustain their lifestyles and livelihoods. I have also seen how impactful large scale Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), such as Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, can improve the health of our island communities. Therefore, I support expanding the PRIMNM boundaries to the full extent of the United States’ Exclusive Economic Zone and creating the largest highly-protected MPA in the world. I believe this proposal is a win for our people and the planet.”

In June, the Pacific Remote Islands Coalition released an 84-page report by 18 co-authors who include traditional knowledge practitioners and marine biologists from across the United States, US territories, and the Pacific Islands. The report provides in-depth knowledge of the cultural and biological significance of the proposed expansion—from outlining threats such as deep sea-

mining and industrial fishing to providing scientific data of the conservation value of protecting species and ecosystems. The report has more than 260 references from scientific journal articles, books, and additional sources.

The PRI Coalition thanked Mayor Victorino for supporting the expansion of the PRIMNM with this statement:

"We welcome Mayor Victorino's support and leadership for ocean conservation. The Pacific Remote Islands hold precious connections to our past and promise for our future as Pacific peoples. In the same way these waters are at the nexus of cross-cultural voyaging pathways across Polynesia, they likewise are an intersection of climate change mitigation, cultural practice and scientific discovery. We must protect these waters."

Governor of Hawai'i David Ige and Congressman Ed Case of Hawai'i have also released letters of support to the President.

The Pacific Remote Islands contain some of the last healthy, wild ecosystems in the Pacific Ocean. These waters are home to resilient coral reefs; threatened, endangered and critically endangered whales, sharks, rays, turtles, and seabirds; deep-sea species not found anywhere else on Earth; and the waterways of ancient and modern Indigenous voyagers.

Along with expanding the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, the Coalition asks that President Biden start a process with Pacific Islanders that would honor the area with a new name to better reflect the area's unique history and cultural significance. The Coalition further requests that the administration consider a co-management structure for the PRI Marine National Monument that places traditional ecological knowledge and modern science at the forefront of ongoing and future protections for the Pacific.

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About Pacific Remote Islands Coalition

The Pacific Remote Islands (PRI) Coalition is a community-driven effort to expand the protections for the PRI Marine National Monument. Our diverse coalition includes elders, fishermen, educators, cultural practitioners, non-profits, community groups, scientists, religious organizations, veterans, and many others across the Pacific. We have a collective interest in protecting the cultural, natural, and historical legacy of these special islands and atolls. To learn more about the effort and to sign the petition in support of protection, visit protectpri.com.