

Designating a new National Marine Sanctuary to enhance protections for the Pacific Remote Islands

Preserving and Perpetuating Pacific History and Culture

Photo credit: Erik Oberg/Island Conservation

The Pacific Remote Islands (PRI) are rich in history stretching from ancient Polynesian voyaging, to whaling and trading in the 19th and early 20th centuries, to the colonization and research efforts of the Hui Panalā'au, to the Pacific theater of WWII, to the living cultural practices that continue to this day.

Polynesian Voyaging

The traditional wayfinders of Polynesia navigated wide expanses of open ocean with a deep understanding of the complex and sophisticated patterns of the ocean currents, winds, skies, and of wildlife. With expert interpretation of the Pacific pelagic seascape, they were able to traverse across wide marine corridors with expert proficiency to arrive at tiny, remote islands throughout the Pacific, including those of PRI. As stopping points for resources, temporary shelter, and cultural practice, the islands of PRI have a deep legacy of voyaging and the potential to perpetuate its practice into the future.



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Hui Panalā'au members, 1936

Photo credit: Image courtesy of George Kahanu, Sr.; Credit: Center for Oral History, Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum

Final Resting Places

PRI and its surrounding waters hold the final resting places of shipwrecks and other abandoned historic sites from the whaling era in the 19th century to WWII. Increasing protections for PRI would allow further exploration and potential discovery of wrecks, WWII-era ordnance, and other artifacts of historic and cultural value.

Hui Panalā'au: Service and Sacrifice

More than 130 mostly Native Hawaiian young men known as the Hui Panalā'au bravely served on Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands during WWII. From 1935 to 1942, they helped the United States secure territorial claim over those islands. During their time, these men meticulously documented the environmental conditions of the islands and their waters, recorded weather patterns, and surveyed seabirds, laying the foundation for future discoveries. With limited medical access and exposure to bombings during WWII, three members of Hui Panalā'au lost their lives as a result of their service. Their sacrifice and the dedication and service of all the members of Hui Panalā'au should be honored and celebrated in a new national marine sanctuary.

For Future Generations

Teaching and practicing traditional voyaging requires seascapes like those of PRI-- low-lying islands within intact oceanic ecosystems. Protecting PRI not only honors and preserves the history of its lands, waters, and the people who crossed them, but allows for continued exploration, discovery, and perpetuation of culture.

To contact the Protect PRI Coalition:
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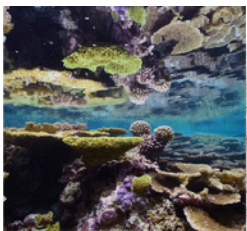


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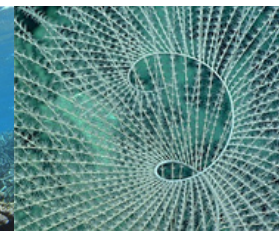


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