

Increase protections for the Pacific Remote Islands:

Honoring Cultural and Biological Legacies

Photo credit: TNC/Kydd Pollock

The Pacific Remote Islands (PRI) contain some of the last wild and healthy ecosystems in the world's ocean. The waters of PRI are home to resilient coral reefs; threatened and endangered wildlife; species found nowhere else on Earth; and the waterways of ancient and modern Indigenous voyagers.

Proposed Expansion

PRI was originally established in 2009 by President George W. Bush and expanded in 2014 by President Barack Obama under the Antiquities Act. The Protect PRI Coalition is requesting that President Joseph Biden increase protections for PRI by designating a new National Marine Sanctuary that includes the currently unprotected area within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Biodiversity

The waters of PRI are home to many threatened, endangered, and critically endangered species including sharks, rays, whales, seabirds, turtles, and more. The unprotected areas of PRI contain 98 seamounts, known to be ecological hot spots with yet-to-be discovered species.

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



Hui Panalā'au members, 1936

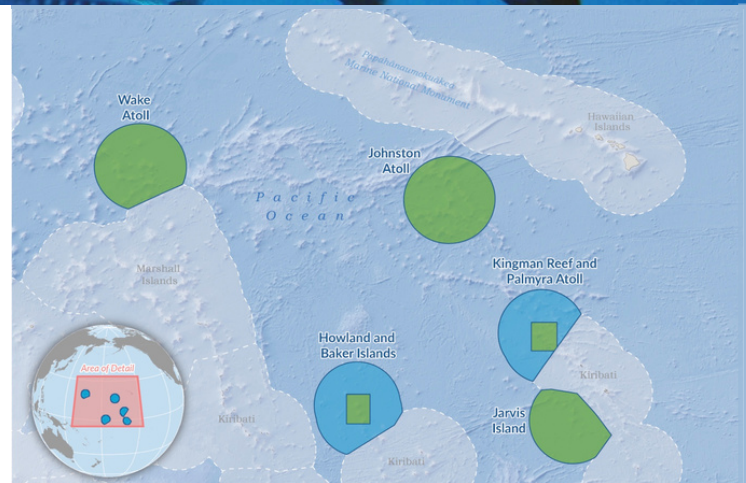


Figure 1: Proposed National Marine Sanctuary around the Pacific Remote Islands

Proposed Sanctuary boundaries (blue and green)
Current monument boundaries (green)

0 500 km
SOURCE: NOAA, MPRRIac; Marine Conservation Institute; MarineRegions.org; Natural Earth.

Cultural Significance

More than 130 young men, mostly Native Hawaiian, made up the Hui Panalā'au. Sent to Howland and Baker and Jarvis Islands from 1935-1942, they enabled the U.S. to claim jurisdiction of this area in the Pacific. Since time immemorial, PRI had a rich history of oceanic voyaging, serving as stopping points for Polynesian voyagers.

Today, PRI has the potential to become a premier education site for Pacific Islander voyaging. To perpetuate these cultures and traditions, it is critical to protect these ocean ecosystems from further human impact.

Timing and Impact

There are crucial connections between coral reefs and open ocean ecosystems that require additional protection. Highly mobile wildlife, such as seabirds, sharks, and turtles, need more rigorous protections in the area. With threats from deep-sea mining, climate change, and overfishing, the time to better protect these areas against future exploitation is now. Greatly increasing protections for PRI to the full extent of the U.S. EEZ and designating it as a new National Marine Sanctuary would serve as a gift to future generations.

Our request to President Biden includes:

- Designating the waters surrounding the PRI to the full extent of the U.S. EEZ as a new National Marine Sanctuary
- Changing the name, Pacific Remote Islands, to reflect the significance of the area in Pacific Islander cultures
- Engaging in a co-management framework to include a broader spectrum of oceanic indigenous communities

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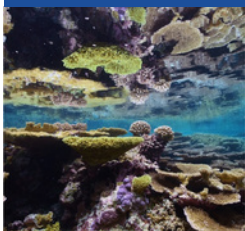


Photo credit: Kydd Pollock



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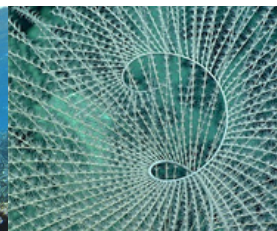


Photo credit: NOAA Okeanos Explorer



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