

KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance

Help Protect the NWHI! Submit written testimony by May 17, 2002.

The NWHI is the last critical habitat for Hawaiian monk seals

Take action to protect our fragile environment and Native Hawaiian traditional and customary rights.

To stay informed and send free faxes to decision-makers about NWHI protection, sign up for Action Network Alerts with KAHEA at www.kahea.org

Your help is greatly needed at this historic moment in time.

The Sanctuary designation process is the **last stage** in establishing final protections for the NWHI. At Sanctuary meetings on each island, NOAA representatives will ask for input on how the proposed NWHI Sanctuary should protect this fragile region.

Please help to identify the wide range of threats to the NWHI ecosystem including the possibility of the expansion of commercial activities, planned cruise ship access, unsupervised and excessive "research" activities, military activities, dumping and a wide range of other threats to the integrity of the NWHI ecosystem. The federally-funded Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council has been leading an all-out attack against protections for the NWHI.

Talking Points:

- 1. The principal purpose of the NWHI Sanctuary must be to ensure the comprehensive, strong, and long-term conservation** and protection of the NWHI ecosystem, and related marine species and resources, in their wild character.
- 2. The Sanctuary** should be managed utilizing a **precautionary approach** with resource protection favored when there is a lack of information regarding any given activity.
- 3. Sanctuary protections must supplement and complement the Executive Orders** that created the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. Sanctuary protections **must include all of the protections embodied in the Executive Orders**, such as:
 - A. The grandfathering in of existing fishers -- including 8 to 10 active bottomfish fishers and the small number recreational fishers - at current levels of catch.
 - B. No new fisheries shall be established in the NWHI -- such as coral harvesting, aquarium fish, or coral reef fisheries -- and there will be no re-opening of inactive fisheries, such as the closed NWHI lobster fishery.
 - C. The Sanctuary Advisory Council (currently the Reserve Advisory Council) should continue to be citizen-based, with strong conflict of interest regulations, and with government officials as non-voting members.
 - D. No mining, drilling, anchoring on coral, removing live or dead coral.
 - E. All activities in the Sanctuary must specifically support and facilitate the implementation of the mandate of the long-term conservation and preservation of the NWHI ecosystem in its wild/natural character.

4. As guardian of a public trust resource, the Sanctuary must provide further protections:

A. **State waters must be included in the Sanctuary**, with the same stringent levels of protection and with additional Kapu (closed) zones in the state waters of the NWHI lagoons, at fragile Kure Atoll, French Frigate Shoals, and Pearl and Hermes Reef, critical habitat for endangered and protected species.

C. **Activities in the NWHI - including research, educational, scientific, commercial, recreational activities** – should be allowed based on a precautionary approach and only if the proposed activities support the primary goal of protection and preservation of the NWHI in their wild state and the prevention of further degradation of the Sanctuary Ecosystem.

5. **Enforcement.** The single most important element in protecting these remote NWHI reefs and ensuring compliance with regulations is the implementation of an effective monitoring and enforcement system. Without this, protection efforts will fail.

- **Automatic 24hr Vessel Monitoring Systems** must be required
- There must be **independent dock-side inspection** of all vessels returning from the NWHI
- There must be significant sanctions for violations of Sanctuary regulations.

6. **Military activity within the Sanctuary** should be limited to the clean-up and clearing of military structures, dump sites, toxins and other military debris to restore these areas to their natural state.

Threats to the NWHI include:

* Marine debris

* Opening up the NWHI to new commercial activities

- * Commercial fishing, including
- * The tropical aquarium fish trade
- * The live reef fish trade for restaurants and markets
- * Mining of corals, sands, and deep-sea minerals
- * Opening up the closed NWHI lobster fishery
- * Expansion of the bottomfish fishery
- * Establishment of "coral reef fisheries"
- Bio-prospecting

* Increased human impact on fragile ecosystem as result of Reserve and Sanctuary designation

- * **Eco-tourism** and "educational" tourism and related activities in new areas
- * **Cruise ship** access
- * **Pollution** and contamination from increased air, vessel, and human access

* Research activities

- * Large increase in NWHI "research" activities since Reserve was designated
- * Lack of monitoring/oversight of research, potential for abuse
- * Increase in potential for research which damages the NWHI ecosystem and its inhabitants
- * Research which disturbs monk seal colonies, leads to monk seal mortality
- * "Research" carried out by commercial fishing vessels

* Military use

- * Military storage, use, and disposal of hazardous materials
- * Military research
- * Military exercises, war games, and bombing
- * Deteriorating WWII structures

*** Dumping**

- * Including deep sea dumping
- * Dumping of CO2
- * Dumping of vessel effluent

*** Other threats**

- * Shipwrecks/vessel groundings
- * Anchor damage to coral reefs
- * Marine testing and use of or research with sonic devices
- * Construction and Dredging
- * Sophisticated new technologies allowing access to pristine parts of the ecosystem such as re-breathing devices and robotic submersibles
- * Poaching
- * Intensive campaign against NWHI protections by Wespac, targeting federal and state officials and enforcement agencies
- * Lack of enforcement by U.S. Coast Guard

How you can help:

Please comment on the points that you consider to be important in protecting the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Comments **must be received by Friday, May 17, 2002** and can be sent to NOAA at:

Via email to:

nwhi@noaa.gov

Faxed to NOAA:

(808) 397-2662

Via Mail:

NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve
6700 Kalaniana'ole Highway, #215
Honolulu, Hawaii 96825

Or sign up on our website <http://www.kahea.org/> and send NOAA a fax for free through our web-based Action Alert Network. We'll be sending out an alert at the end of April.

Mahalo Nui Loa for your help to protect this phenomenally unique and wonderful pristine coral reef ecosystem!

For background information on the NWHI, visit www.kahea.org/

