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Hawaiian monk seals are an endangered species with a population of only about 1,300 living primarily in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

## Bush to create huge isle monument

**The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands will immediately receive maximum protection**

>> [1906 act paves way for monument](#)

**By Diana Leone**  
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President Bush is expected to announce in Washington today that he wants to make the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands a national monument.

In doing so, Bush would establish permanent protection for the 1,400-mile-long, 100-mile-wide section of the Hawaiian archipelago and coral reefs, a move that environmental groups, native Hawaiians and others have been seeking for years.

"Building on all the work that was done in the last

five years under the marine sanctuary process, the president has decided to elevate the designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands area to national monument status," said a statement released yesterday by the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

"This means the area will get immediate protection rather than having to wait another year" for completion of the ongoing national marine sanctuary designation process, the release said.

A senior administration official said the president's decision will ensure maximum protection for the islands, including a phase-out over five years of all commercial fishing.

Disputes over whether to allow fishing in the proposed sanctuary had been a point of contention between conservationists and the Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council, a quasi-governmental advisory group that sets fishing policy for federal waters in Hawaii.

Establishing a national marine sanctuary requires consideration of commercial fishermen.

As recently as yesterday morning, officials with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Sanctuary Program were expecting Bush to announce that the waters around the Northwestern Hawaiian islands would become the 14th national marine sanctuary.

They were surprised to hear yesterday of Bush's plans to instead declare it a national monument, bypassing the remainder of the designation process, including the release of a draft environmental impact study and a round of public hearings.

Even government and environmental insiders who have been working on the proposed designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as a sanctuary said yesterday they were surprised at the president's change in tactics.

There was speculation that NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service might share jurisdiction over such a national monument, but representatives of both agencies said they would not comment until after Bush's announcement today.

"What I'm thinking is that the worst monument is better than the best sanctuary," said Cha Smith, executive director of the Kaheha Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance, a group that has promoted making the islands a "place of refuge."

The monument status prevents "extractive uses" -- such as fishing or mining -- and will afford more protection than a sanctuary, Smith said. However, she cautioned that her group will monitor management plans for the monument "to make sure that destructive practices are not allowed under the guise of 'research' or 'education.'"

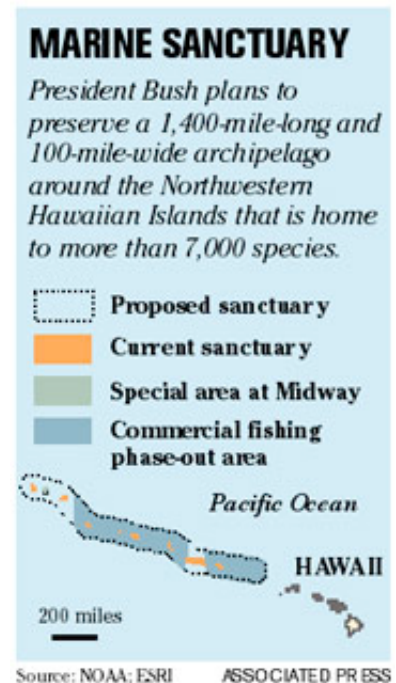
NOAA Administrator Conrad Lautenbacher called protecting the area "the single largest act of ocean conservation in history. It's a large milestone."

The state Sierra Club, Hawaii Fishing and Boating Association, Polynesian Voyaging Society and Hawaii Audubon Society all released expressions of support yesterday.

The isles and atolls are home to more than 7,000 marine species, one-quarter of which are found only in

## ON THE NET

President Bush's announcement is to be shown live at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) at 8 a.m. today and might also be carried on C-SPAN.



the Hawaiian archipelago. The area is key for the endangered Hawaiian monk seal and the threatened green sea turtle.

Gov. Linda Lingle signed new state rules in September that ban fishing and sharply limit public access to state waters of the Northwestern Islands, which are from any land to three miles at sea.

The high, rocky islands of Nihoa and Mokumanamana have great cultural importance to native Hawaiians.

The new monument will be given a native Hawaiian name, using suggestions from state residents, the administration official said.

NOAA will develop regulations for managing the monument. Last month, state and federal officials signed an agreement to manage the pristine islands jointly.

Administration officials say their intent is to preserve zoned access for native Hawaiian activities, educational and scientific expeditions. Recreational and tourist visits that are no more harmful than scuba diving or photography could be allowed, although permits will be required for all activities.

The private Pew Charitable Trusts, which has pushed for the sanctuary for eight years, is looking at providing some financial relief to people losing their fishing permits in the area.

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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## 1906 act paves way for monument

### Star-Bulletin staff

To confer national monument status to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, President Bush is using the National Antiquities Act of 1906, the same law that President Bill Clinton used to name 19 national monuments and expand three others during his time in office.

Until now, Bush has only used the act once, according to a February report on "National Monument Issues" by the Congressional Research Service.

Presidents have designated about 120 national monuments under the law, totaling more than 70 million acres, although most of the acreage is no longer in monument status, the report said. Congress has abolished some monuments outright and converted many more into other designations, such as national parks.

President Franklin Roosevelt used the law to create monuments most frequently, 28 times, and President Jimmy Carter designated the most acreage, 56 million acres in Alaska, the study says.

By comparison, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands national monument would encompass almost 135,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean -- an area larger than all the country's national parks combined.

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