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OCEAN CONSERVATION

Northwestern Islands to become monument

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Advertiser Science Writer

President Bush this morning is expected to establish the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Monument — by far the largest protected area of any kind in the country and the world's largest marine refuge.

Designation as a monument means tight restrictions on most kinds of activities including fishing, hunting and harvesting to protect more than 7,000 species of living things, a quarter of which are unique to the Hawaiian Islands. Hundreds of thousands of seabirds nest on the sand banks and rocks. The waters contain the world's only remaining ecosystem where predators — like sharks, ulua or jacks, and big snappers — dominate.

"When you add it all up, it's a world-class ecological jewel. From both a national and global perspective, this really is a landmark conservation event," said Joshua Reichert, head of the environment program for the private Pew Charitable Trusts, which is studying buying out the permits of the eight bottomfishing boats that operate in the islands.

The monument's dimensions will span 140,000 square miles over the atolls, reefs and land masses that extend 1,200 miles north of Kaua'i. There is not much dry land here — a few volcanic rocks, some sand bars and coral banks — but its mid-oceanic isolation has protected both marine and bird life.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are part of the State of Hawai'i, except for Midway Atoll, which is U.S. territory.

The historic decision to name it a monument stunned Washington bureaucrats and conservation groups alike. Just yesterday morning, all were expecting a presidential announcement of support for a national marine sanctuary in the region — a process that has been under way for five years and had a year left to go.

MUCH LIKE A SANCTUARY

Bush's announcement today pulls the plug on the sanctuary process, but a senior administration official said the national monument will look and act much like the proposed sanctuary it replaces.

"The president saw that there is a large consensus in support of protection (and concluded) we can make the protection happen right now," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. To establish the monument, Bush will use the 1906 Antiquities Act, which gives him the authority to establish a protected area on his own initiative and without needing



Squirrelfish at French Frigate Shoals will be safe from any fishing in a few years.

JAMES WATT | NOAA



The boundary will start near Nihoa, the island closest to the main island chain.

JAN TENBRUGGENCATE | The Honolulu Advertiser



The islands' new status could help endangered monk seals rebound.

Congressional approval. It is only the second time he has used that authority.

Establishing so huge a conservation zone is a big move for an administration that has been tagged with low environmental marks for such things as failing to designate wilderness as aggressively as some earlier presidents, and for moves to privatize some federal properties.

"This is the largest protection area in the United States. It is an event unparalleled in history," said Stephanie Fried, of Environmental Defense. "But we still need to see the language, the details."

Details are to be released by the White House today, but some key features of the refuge are these:

- The monument will cover the roughly 140,000 square miles and extend from 50 miles east of Nihoa Island to 50 miles west of Kure Atoll, including the waters within 50 miles of any land or emergent reef. The only marine reserve that comes close is on Australia's Great Barrier Reef.
- It will be the first national monument operated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, which will operate the monument in tandem with its 13 national marine sanctuaries — one of which is the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary.
- All fishing will be phased out over five years, and thereafter, no extraction of resources of any kind will be allowed except for scientific investigations that have received permits.
- Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, which has a Navy-built airfield, would be the only spot where public access might be permitted. The former military base has streets, a water system, power, communications and housing, as well as the world's largest albatross colony. Parts of the area in and around the new national monument would be jointly managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of Hawai'i, which controls many of the reef areas and operates a wildlife refuge on Kure Atoll.

The monument will get a Hawaiian name, but it has not yet been selected.

FILM IMPRESSED BUSH

Resources under the protection of the monument and associated National Wildlife Refuges and Hawai'i state reserves are enormous.

"I was given the rare, precious opportunity to sail and dive in this area. It helps us understand the beauty, the diversity and the power of a living reef," said Nainoa Thompson, the Kamehameha Schools trustee and Polynesian Voyaging Society president who two years ago navigated the voyaging canoe Hokule'a through the entire chain.

"It's a benchmark. It's a school. It's our teacher. In Hawai'i we have a sanctuary, a pu'uhonua (refuge), a place where we let ecology evolve in a natural way. This is our gift to humankind, our contribution to the planet," he said.

Bush aligned himself to the cause of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands on April 5, when he met with environmental filmmaker Jean-Michel Cousteau and saw his film on the the islands, "Voyage to Kure." Gov. Linda Lingle and other Hawai'i officials were there.

"The president was impressed with the diversity of the wildlife after watching the film," said Russell Pang, Lingle's chief of media relations.

Sen. Fred Hemmings, R-25th (Lanikai, Hawai'i Kai), who was among those in the White House

JAMES WATT | NOAA



Laysan albatrosses live on Midway, the one spot that may allow public access.

DAVID LIITTSCHWAGER & SUSAN MIDDLETON



The beaches of French Frigate Shoals are the primary nesting habitat for most of the Hawaiian green sea turtles.

NOAA Fish and Wildlife Service photo

NATIONAL MONUMENTS

The following is a list of all national monuments and the presidents that proclaimed them under authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906.

Presidential additions to preexisting national monuments and national monuments authorized or established directly by Congress are not included. Proclaimed national

screening room, said the monument is not likely to be an economic boon to the state, but it creates a legacy for future generations.

"Hawai'i is at the tip of the spear when it comes to conservation initiatives," Hemmings said. "This will clearly be one of the largest conservation sanctuaries in the world."

It is difficult to describe the grandeur of these islands.

Last month, The Honolulu Advertiser published a series of stories entitled "Ocean Odyssey," describing the islands through the eyes of scientists conducting research there. In the water, they saw impossibly large schools of fishes, including hundreds of ulua and dozens of sharks at one site called Rapture Reef.

The clouds over the vast reefs of French Frigate Shoals were tinted green from the sunlight reflected off aquamarine waters. The seaweed on the rocky faces of Gardner Pinnacles were rich in browns, greens, reds and yellows, enriched by the guano that capped the worn oceanic rocks. Swirling flocks of seabirds — terns, boobies, frigatebirds, noddies and albatrosses — haunted the skies over Nihoa.

A surprised environmental community, which has urged strong protections for the wildlife of the region, was supportive of Bush's initiative, but cautious.

The Hawaiian-environmental alliance, Kahea, has long backed a national monument rather than a sanctuary, because it more closely resembles the Hawaiian concept of a pu'u honua — a pure refuge, Kahea director Cha Smith said.

"That was what we wanted from the beginning. Now we have to be sure that the monument program works in close partnership with the state and the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure seamless management," Smith said.

"The devil's in the details — what kinds of protections are in place and what kinds of uses are allowed," said Greenpeace oceans specialist John Hoyer.

Hawai'i Sierra Club director Jeff Mikulina called the decision to establish a monument a "bold step."

"By placing this area out of reach of fishing, commercial activities and human meddling, we are doing a tremendous favor to generations yet to come. Some places we just need to let 'be,' " Mikulina said.

"I was really surprised," said Ellen Athas, director of ecosystems protection at the Ocean Conservancy. She said her organization approves of the permanent protection a monument provides, but is concerned that "what we don't know yet is what protections this monument is going to put into place."

'A BOLD STEP'

The head of the Hawai'i Audubon Society's Northwestern Hawaiian Islands campaign, Keiko Bonk, reflected some of the anxiety among environmental groups.

"It's a bold step for the president. Some people are really very thrilled and happy. Some more hesitant. They want to make sure that the plan includes all the restrictions" that have been under discussion in the sanctuary designation process, Bonk said.

Bill Brown, director of Bishop Museum, was the science adviser to Clinton Administration Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt when they both argued for establishment of the region as a

monuments retaining this designation in 1999 are marked with an asterisk.

Theodore Roosevelt

Devils Tower, Wyo.*

El Morro, N.M.*

Montezuma Castle, Ariz.*

Petrified Forest, Ariz.

Chaco Canyon, N.M.

Cinder Cone, Calif.

Lassen Peak, Calif.

Gila Cliff Dwellings, N.M.*

Tonto, Ariz.*

Muir Woods, Calif.*

Grand Canyon, Ariz.

Pinnacles, Calif.*

Jewel Cave, S.D.*

Natural Bridges, Utah*

Lewis and Clark Cavern, Mont.

Tumacacori, Ariz.

Wheeler, Colo.

Mount Olympus, Wash.

William Howard Taft

Navajo, Ariz.*

Oregon Caves, Ore.*

national monument. After receiving legal advice that recommended against it at that time, President Clinton created the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve and launched the proposed national marine sanctuary process.

That process, under way for six years, has included public scoping meetings, as well as the production of a set of draft regulations, a draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan, all of which were to be released during the next few weeks. White House officials suggested that the work won't be lost, since most of it has led to the monument decision, and will be employed in the operation of the monument.

Brown still feels the monument is a better choice than a sanctuary.

"I think it's great, and it's kind of fascinating that he (Bush) is doing it. I'm optimistic that this is a significant step forward," Brown said.

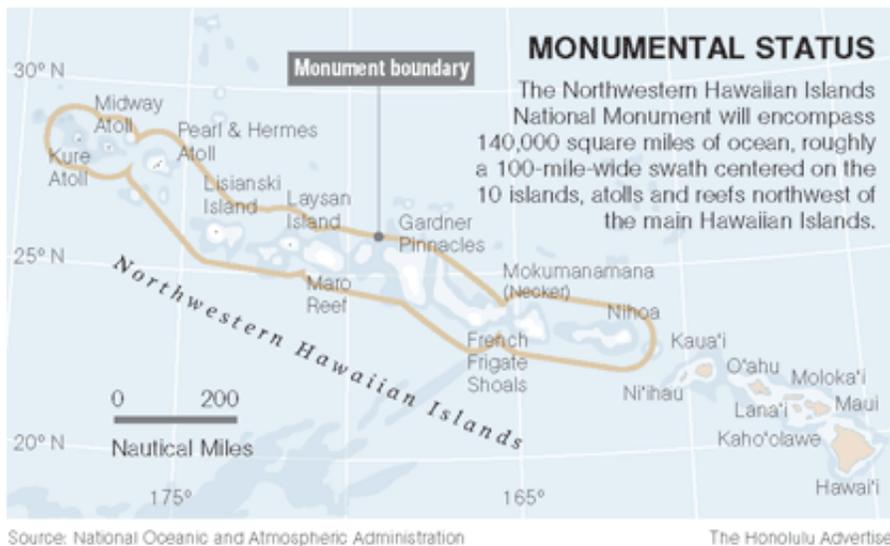
The administration itself spared no superlatives.

"It's the single-largest act of ocean conservation in history. It's a large milestone," said Conrad C. Lautenbacher, head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "It is a place to maintain biodiversity and to maintain basically the nurseries of the Pacific. It spawns a lot of the life that permeates the middle of the Pacific Ocean."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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[Back](#)

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- Mukuntuweap, Utah
- Shoshone Cavern, Wyo.
- Gran Quivira (now Salinas Pueblo Missions), N.M.*
- Sitka, Alaska
- Rainbow Bridge, Utah*
- Big Hole Battlefield, Mont.
- Colorado, Colo.*
- Devils Postpile, Calif.*
- Woodrow Wilson**
- Cabrillo, Calif.*
- Papago Saguaro, Ariz.
- Dinosaur, Utah-Colo.*
- Walnut Canyon, Ariz.*
- Bandelier, N.M.*
- Sieur de Monts, Maine
- Capulin Mountain (now Capulin Volcano), N.M.*
- Old Kasaan, Alaska
- Verendrye, N.D.
- Zion, Utah (incorporated Mukuntuweap, N.M.)
- Casa Grande (now Casa Grande Ruins), Ariz.*
- Katmai, Alaska
- Scotts Bluff, Neb.*
- Yucca House, Colo.*

Warren G. Harding

Lehman Caves, Nev.

Timpanogos Cave, Utah*

Fossil Cycad, S.D.

Aztec Ruin (now Aztec Ruins), N.M.*

Hovenweep, Utah-Colo.*

Mound City Group, Ohio

Pipe Spring, Ariz.*

Bryce Canyon, Utah

Calvin Coolidge

Carlsbad Cave, N.M.

Chiricahua, Ariz.*

Craters of the Moon, Idaho*

Castle Pinckney, S.C.

Fort Marion (now Castillo de San Marcos), Fla.*

Fort Matanzas, Fla.*

Fort Pulaski, Ga.*

Statue of Liberty, N.Y.*

Wupatki, Ariz.*

Glacier Bay, Alaska

Meriwether Lewis, Tenn.

Father Millet Cross, N.Y.

Lava Beds, Calif.*

Herbert Hoover

Arches, Utah

Holy Cross, Colo.

Sunset Crater (now Sunset Crater Volcano), Ariz.*

Great Sand Dunes, Colo.*

Grand Canyon, Ariz.

White Sands, N.M.*

Death Valley, Calif.-Nev.

Saguaro, Ariz.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Colo.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Channel Islands, Calif.

Cedar Breaks, Utah*

Fort Jefferson, Fla.

Joshua Tree, Calif.

Zion, Utah

Organ Pipe Cactus, Ariz.*

Capitol Reef, Utah

Fort Laramie, Wyo.

Santa Rosa Island, Fla.

Tuzigoot, Ariz.*

Jackson Hole, Wyo.

Harry S. Truman

Effigy Mounds, Iowa*

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Edison Laboratory, N.J.

Chesapeake and Ohio
Canal, Md.-W.Va.

John F. Kennedy

Russell Cave, Ala.*

Buck Island Reef, Va.*

Lyndon B. Johnson

Marble Canyon, Ariz.

Jimmy Carter

Admiralty Island, Alaska*

Aniakchak, Alaska*

Becharof, Alaska

Bering Land Bridge,
Alaska

Cape Krusenstern, Alaska*

Denali, Alaska

Gates of the Arctic, Alaska

Kenai Fjords, Alaska

Kobuk Valley, Alaska

Lake Clark, Alaska

Misty Fjords, Alaska*

Noatak, Alaska

Wrangell-St. Elias, Alaska

Yukon-Charley, Alaska

Yukon Flats, Alaska

William J. Clinton

Grand Staircase-Escalante,
Utah*

Grand Canyon-Parashant
National Monument, Ariz.*

Agua Fria National
Monument, Ariz.*

California Coastal National
Monument, Calif.*

Pinnacles National
monument, Calif.
(expansion)

Giant Sequoia National
Monument, Calif.
(expansion)

Hanford Reach, Wash.

Ironwood Forest, Ariz.*

Canyons of the Ancients,
Colo.*

Cascade-Siskiyou, Ore.*

President Lincoln and
Soldiers' Home National
Monument

Craters of the Moon,
Idaho* (expansion)

Vermillion Cliffs, Ariz.*

Carrizo Plain, Calif.*

Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks,
N.M.*

Minidoka Internment,
Idaho

Pompeys Piller, Mont.*

Sonoran Desert National

Monument, Ariz.*

Upper Missouri River
Breaks National
Monument, Mont.*

Virgin Islands Coral Reef,
Va.

Governors Island-Castle
Williams and Fort Jay,
N.Y.

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