

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Accomplishments Fiscal Year 2021

One of the largest conservation areas in the world, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument protects more than 580,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean. The monument's coral islands, seamounts, banks, and shoals include some of the healthiest coral reefs in the U.S. and support dynamic habitats containing a diversity of fish, coral, birds, marine mammals, and other flora and fauna, many of which are unique to the Hawaiian Archipelago.



Mai Ka Pō Mai: Integrating Hawaiian Culture into the Management of Papahānaumokuākea

On June 21, the summer solstice, when the sun reached Mokumanamana on the Tropic of Cancer, the co-trustees of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument released Mai Ka Pō Mai, a guidance document that will help federal and state agencies integrate Native Hawaiian culture into all areas of management for Papahānaumokuākea. The document is the culmination of over 10 years of collaboration with Native Hawaiian community members. Mai Ka Pō Mai articulates values and principles to guide 20 strategies within five management areas that align with Native Hawaiian culture and contemporary Hawaiian stewardship.



Mai Ka Pō Mai will assist in the integration of Native Hawaiian culture into monument management. Photo: NOAA

Papahānaumokuākea Summer Research Expeditions

Two research expeditions were completed this summer on the charter vessel *M/V Imua*, conducting coral reef monitoring, damage assessments, and expanding knowledge of a nuisance limu (algae). Research was conducted to understand biodiversity throughout the monument at five additional atolls. The researchers found that coral reefs, previously damaged by a major hurricane and bleaching events, are slowly making a comeback and observed positive overall health outcomes of the reefs. The re-establishing of long-term reef monitoring sites is crucial to the future management of Papahānaumokuākea.



A phycologist, or marine botanist, surveys algal growth. Photo: NOAA

Papahānaumokuākea Celebrates its 15th Anniversary

On June 15, 2006, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument was designated by President George W. Bush. A year later, it was given its Hawaiian name, Papahānaumokuākea. This year we celebrated 15 years of accomplishments in cooperative conservation and co-management. In August of 2021, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea by President Barack Obama, creating the largest marine conservation area on Earth at the time. Numerous virtual events with co-managing agencies and partners were held throughout the summer to celebrate these important milestones.



Papahānaumokuākea celebrated its 15-year anniversary in 2021. Photo: NOAA

Looking Ahead

- NOAA plans to begin the designation process of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument as a national marine sanctuary. A sanctuary designation provides additional protection for the area and greater permanence for existing protections.
- The monument plans to continue to host monthly virtual webinars to feature our numerous partnerships and accomplishments. In addition, we have developed a significant number of new and innovative curricula for teachers in this virtual world.
- An expedition to previously unexplored seamounts in Papahānaumokuākea, Lili'uokalani Seamounts and Wentworth Seamounts (north and south of Lisianski [Kapou], respectively) will be mapped and explored via a remotely operated vehicle. This expedition will be shared with students in both Hawaiian and English.



The National Marine Sanctuary System is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. The network includes a system of 15 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.