



National Marine Sanctuary Designation Process for Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

PUBLICATION



**Nov. 19,
2021**

NOAA opens public comment on national marine sanctuary designation for Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is invited to submit comments via [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) using docket # NOAA-NOS-2021-0114.

ENDS

**Jan. 31,
2022**

NEXT STEPS

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Virtual public meetings will be held, co-hosted by NOAA and Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources. We welcome public comments in 'ōlelo Hawai'i (Hawaiian language) at all public scoping meetings. For more information, visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov/papahanaumokuakea.



DRAFT PROPOSAL

NOAA prepares a draft sanctuary proposal that includes potential boundaries and regulations.



FINAL DECISION

NOAA will consider all public comments before making a decision on sanctuary designation. If the decision is to move forward, NOAA will prepare final documents. The governor and Congress can review the documents before final designation.

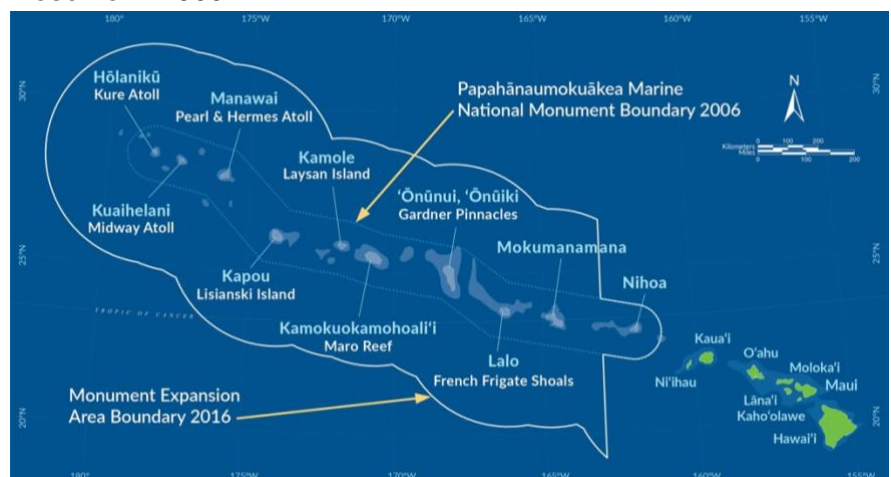


**2-3
years**

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is initiating the process to consider designating marine portions of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument as a national marine sanctuary under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

The area has a long history of being considered for national marine sanctuary designation, beginning with an executive order in 2000 by President William J. Clinton. President George W. Bush designated the monument in 2006 based in part on the sanctuary designation process that was already underway. In 2016, President Barack H. Obama followed the original monument designation with a Presidential Proclamation to expand the monument to its current boundaries. In December 2020, Congress directed NOAA to initiate the sanctuary designation process, which does not change the status of the monument.

National marine sanctuary designation would add the conservation benefits to the marine areas of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument by providing a stable regulatory framework and additional protections to safeguard living, cultural, and maritime heritage resources. The co-management structure that is a hallmark of the monument will continue. NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has been a key partner and co-managing agency in the management of Papahānaumokuākea since the initial designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve in 2000.



This map of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument includes both the original and expanded boundaries. Proposed national marine sanctuary designation would only consider marine waters of the monument, and not terrestrial areas. Image: NOAA

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.

- National Marine Sanctuary
- Marine National Monument
- Proposed National Marine Sanctuary

The designation process will be conducted in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, state of Hawai'i, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

There will be significant opportunities for public comment. Native Hawaiian culture is a foundational element of the management of Papahānaumokuākea, and sanctuary designation will continue to honor and perpetuate spiritual and cultural relationships with this special place.

Designation as a national marine sanctuary would



Mokumanamana (Necker Island) is known for its numerous religious sites and artifacts. Photo: Ruben Carrillo

strengthen and increase the long term protections already existing in the monument, but cannot diminish them. It would enhance existing authorities and the regulatory and enforcement framework.

The establishment of a national marine sanctuary would ensure strong and lasting protection for the marine waters of the monument, and would not include any terrestrial areas.

The process to designate a national marine sanctuary will be done in concert with the monument's co-managing agencies. The foundational



NOAA maritime archaeologists located the wreck of the *Two Brothers*, lost in 1823. Photo: NOAA

framework of any sanctuary designation and future updates to the Monument Management Plan will be done in coordination to ensure consistency of protections.

For more information
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A juvenile Hawaiian monk seal swims near Trig Island, French Frigate Shoals. Photo: Mark Sullivan/NOAA