



Proposed Designation of Pacific Remote Islands National Marine Sanctuary

PUBLIC COMMENT OPENS



April 18,
2023

NOAA opens a public comment period on the proposed Pacific Remote Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

The public is invited to submit comments to the agency via [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) using docket number NOAA-NOS-2023-0052.

ENDS

June 2,
2023

NEXT STEPS



PUBLIC MEETINGS

NOAA will hold virtual and in-person public scoping meetings. For more information, visit the Pacific Remote Islands [website](#).



DRAFT PROPOSAL

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



FINAL DECISION

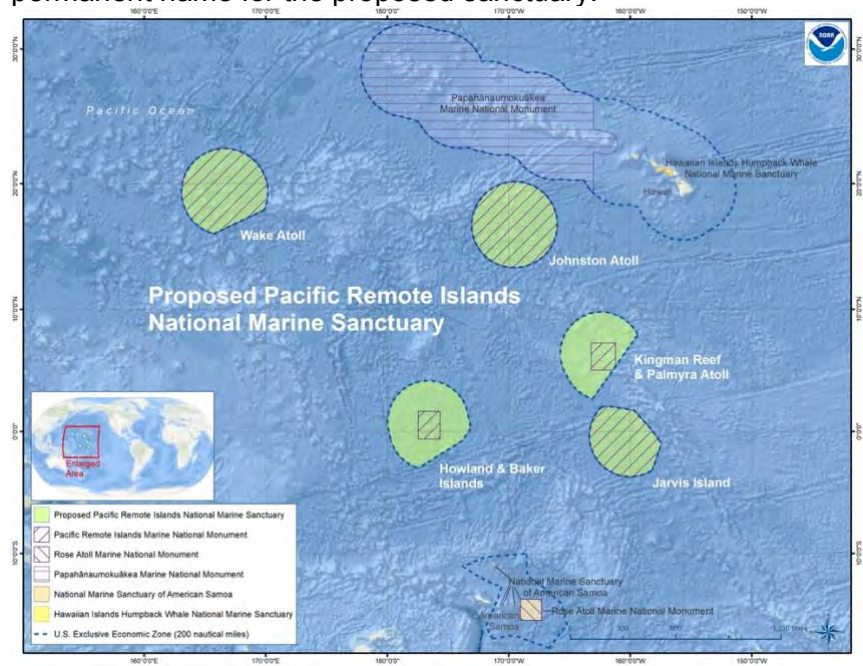
NOAA will consider all public comments prior to moving forward with a sanctuary designation. If NOAA decides to pursue, the agency will prepare final documents. The state and Congress will review the documents before final designation.

About the Nomination

NOAA invites the public to provide comments on an initial proposal to designate a new national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands area, as [directed by President Biden](#) and [affirmed](#) by the Department of Commerce on March 24, 2023. The proposed national marine sanctuary would include the marine areas within the existing Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument, as well as those currently unprotected submerged lands and waters to the full extent of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, an area totaling about 770,000 square miles.

The region's diverse habitats and pristine reefs provide a haven for a variety of fish, invertebrates, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals – many found nowhere else in the world – and are an ideal laboratory for monitoring the effects of climate change.

As a first step in the designation process, NOAA invites comments on the scope and significance of management considerations related to designating the Pacific Remote Islands as a national marine sanctuary. In particular, NOAA is requesting input on options for the proposed sanctuary boundary to ensure it meets the goals outlined above; the location, nature, and value of natural and cultural resources in the area under consideration; specific threats to these resources; information on the Indigenous and Pacific Islander heritage of the area; the regulatory framework most appropriate for management of the proposed sanctuary; and a permanent name for the proposed sanctuary.



Map displaying the general area under consideration for a new national marine sanctuary. Image: NOAA

National Marine Sanctuary System



Uplifting Historical and Cultural Connections

The proposed sanctuary would honor the ancestral, historical, and cultural connections to the Pacific Remote Islands and the surrounding open-ocean waters and recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge, language, stories, and cultural connections between lands, waters, and peoples, and celebrate distinct cultures. Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Carolinian, and many other Pacific Island Indigenous Peoples, have voyaged across this vast

expanse of the Central and Western Pacific Ocean over thousands of years, interpreting the stars, winds, and currents with great skill and proficiency to settle new areas, engage in trade and commerce, and exchange knowledge and cultures among distant communities.

A national marine sanctuary in this area could complement other resource management efforts by raising awareness, supporting research, and guiding coordinated and comprehensive ecosystem-based management.

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary System

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 620,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa.

For questions or additional information, please send inquiries to proposed.primms@noaa.gov.



Branching corals grow on a vibrant shallow coral reef at Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: Jim Maragos/USFWS



Closeup of rare giant clams at Kingman Reef National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: Amanda Pollock/USFWS



Thousands of convict tangs school in the shallows off Jarvis Island. Photo: Courtney Couch/NOAA

