



Proposed Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands

Step 1: Public Comment Period

April 18, 2023 – June 2, 2023



Current Step: Review of Public Comments and Preparation of Draft Documents

Mid 2023 to Late 2024



Step 3: Release Draft Designation Documents and Solicit Public Comments

Target: Late-2024 to Early-2025



Step 4: Prepare Final Designation Documents

Target: Early-2025 to Late-2025



Step 5: Publish Final Designation Documents

Target: Late-2025



Step 6: Final Decision on Sanctuary Designation

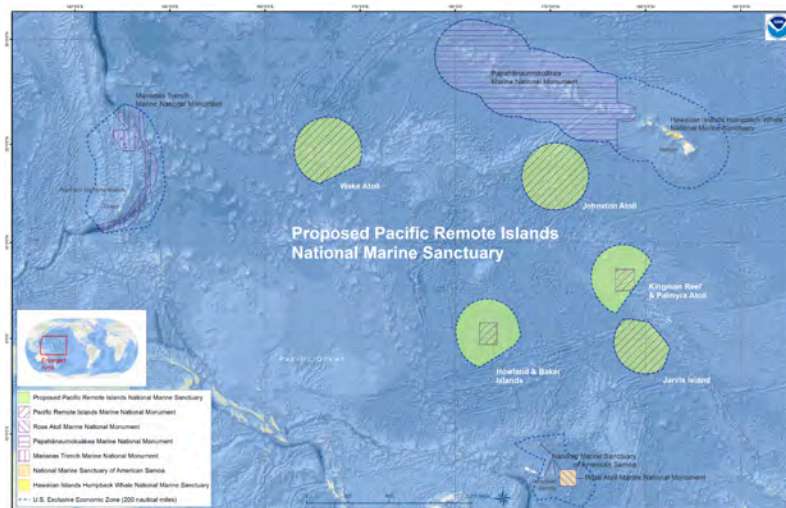
Target: Late-2025

About the Proposed Designation

On March 24, 2023, [President Biden](#) directed the Secretary of Commerce to consider initiating the [designation process](#) for a proposed national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands. On April 18, 2023, [NOAA](#) issued a [Notice of Intent](#) to Conduct Scoping and to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary for the Pacific Remote Islands, launching the designation process. The proposed sanctuary designation would allow NOAA to complement and supplement the existing protections for the [Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument](#) with additional regulatory and non-regulatory tools, and to conserve additional areas outside the Monument's existing boundary. The proposed sanctuary would not include terrestrial areas.

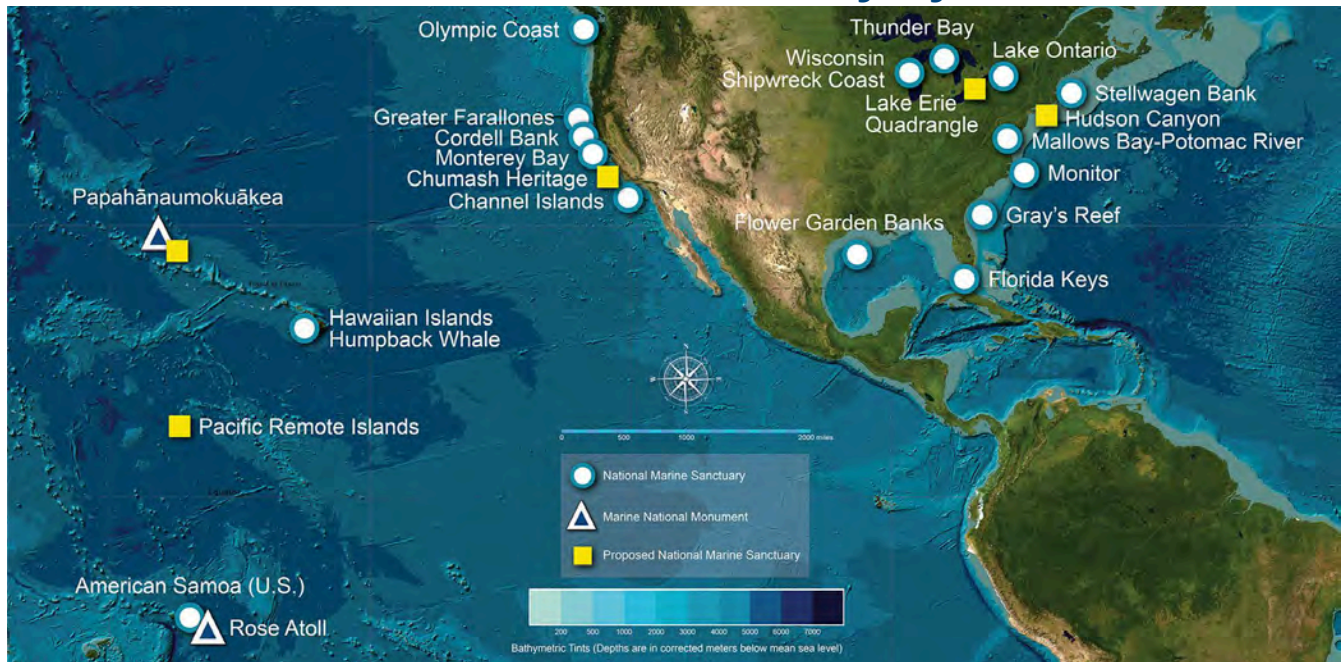
From April 18 to June 2, 2023, NOAA solicited input on scope and management considerations related to designating a national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands. NOAA hosted in-person meetings in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, held two virtual meetings, and received nearly 57,000 written and oral comments.

Based upon the comments and information NOAA gathered, including from other agencies and from participants at a workshop in American Samoa, NOAA is preparing the draft documents for the proposed sanctuary, including the proposed rule, draft environmental impact statement, and draft management plan. NOAA anticipates holding additional public meetings on the draft designation documents in late 2024 and early 2025.



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 and celebrate the ancestral, historical, and cultural connections to the Pacific Remote Islands and the surrounding open-ocean waters, recognizing the importance of Indigenous knowledge, language, stories, and cultural connections between lands, waters, and peoples. Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Carolinian, and many other Indigenous Pacific Island 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.

Stewarding a Large Natural Laboratory

The region's diverse collection of atolls, shoals, banks, coral reefs, seamounts, deep sea, and open ocean habitats provides a haven for a variety of fish, invertebrates, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals – many found nowhere else in the world – and is an ideal laboratory for monitoring the effects of climate change.

Adding Complimentary Management

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

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

[Revised September 2024]



Deep sea coral reefs provide habitat for many unique and undiscovered species. Photo: Ocean Exploration Trust/NOAA



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



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

<https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/pacific-remote-islands/>

