

Tony Costa
Hawaii Nearshore Fishermen
5562 Haleola Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96821
tonyc@hawaii.rr.com

Date: Wednesday, June 08, 2016

To: The June 8 meeting of the Northwest Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council

From: Tony Costa

Re: Remarks in opposition to the proposed NWHI Papahānaumokuākea Sanctuary Expansion

My name is Tony Costa and I am honored to represent a segment of the fishing community, Hawaii Nearshore Fishermen, in this very important discussion about Hawaii's Nearshore and offshore waters.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns regarding a sanctuary expansion and how this would affect local food production and the fishermen.

The fishing community is a vital component of our nearshore and offshore environment, and we thank you for recognizing our role and that you have placed enough importance on Nearshore and offshore waters and the fishermen to include us in the discussion.

The fishermen were once highly regarded and esteemed community members. Providers of the primary protein staple, before the modern agricultural and cash and market economy and subsequent convenience living of present day - the fishermen held high standing. His place in society and skillful occupation was never questioned.

Hawaii's modern day nearshore and offshore fishermen are unique in that they practice a time honored craft in an era and a population of modern day convenience and disconnect.

I believe that this “disconnect” of modern day society/ population from our environment may be responsible for many of the resource concerns and subsequent fishing prohibitive initiatives we are faced with today, and also for the misunderstandings about the fishermen’s role in the environment.

The Fishermen fully understand the conservation side of the equation and are not just looking through rose colored glasses, but with their own raw, empirical data that shows many fisheries to be healthy year after year, it shows that something has been done correctly, be it regulatory management measures, the fishermen’s own practices, as well as the profound resilience of our resource.

Good scientific data and evidence that validates the strength of the resource sometimes gets left out.

The importance of providing nearshore and offshore caught species fresh from the ocean to those who cannot catch fish themselves also traces its roots back to the Hawaiian way of “mahele” where the fishermen would share and divide the catch for dissemination to the community. Today various markets and vendors are the supply chain / vehicle that distribute and sell the fish to the people.

The biggest and most valid argument against this proposed Sanctuary expansion would be that these invisible lines on a map would effectively cripple Hawaii’s bright light of local food production - wild caught local seafood.

Hawaii Nearshore fishermen are in vehement opposition to the proposed Sanctuary expansion. While HNF do not technically fish in the zone of proposed expansion, Hawaii’s offshore Longline fleet does and further, we do see the writing on the wall and are seriously concerned of further expansion.

It is estimated that 10% of pelagic landing catch come from this expansion area (proposed closure to fishing) and would be affected - this would amount to \$10 million dollar ex-vessel value -

Hawaii based pelagic Longline and Hawaii nearshore fisheries talent and vessels have put capture fisheries at the top 10 of Hawaii’s Food Crop at 112 million dollars annually (NMFS)

All these spectacular number are attained while fishing under the most stringent of rules and regulations and are a model fishery in terms of regulations, accountability and sustainability.

While the symbolic value of having the largest “sanctuary” in the world is a laudable gesture and indeed may succeed in “sending a message” and perhaps raise the consciousness of conservation issues, it is just that, symbolic only and not genuine in nature - The proposed expansion only vilifies and discriminates against one group of sustainable U.S. food producers - Hawaii based Longline fishermen who provide wild caught pelagic Seafood.

Further, the “transferred effect” of this would be an increase of imported food products - increasing our island based economy’s already over dependence on imports - shifting U.S. seafood production to foreign imports.

Both nearshore and pelagic fisheries have proven to be renewable, are hugely important to islanders, and are an integral component of a true feather in our cap - Locally produced Hawaiian Seafood - Healthy, sustainable, and something to cherish and be proud of.

Please help us continue to provide Hawaii Markets with local food by not implementing an expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Costa

Cc:

There is no scientific or conservation justification to support expanding the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM).

The existing monument provides protection to the coral reef ecosystem, other vulnerable habitats and species, and cultural resources from 0 to 50 nautical miles (nm) offshore.

Expanding the PMNM beyond this area would not provide any additional conservation benefits for highly mobile species such as tuna, billfish, sharks, seabirds and marine mammals that range well beyond the US exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

Marine resources found 50 to 200 nm offshore in the NWHI and surrounding US EEZ are already protected and subject to comprehensive management regulations and monitoring.

Laysan and Black-footed albatross are already protected by a suite of domestic and international mitigation measures that will not be augmented by boundary expansion of the PMNM.

Expansion of the monument boundaries would create a redundancy of regulations.

- Expansion would have negative socio-economic impacts to Hawaii longline fishery, Hawaii economy and seafood consumers, and the nation. Loss of sustainable fisheries production from Hawaii longline fleet would increase Hawaii and US reliance on foreign, unregulated seafood sources.
- Expansion would not provide additional buffer from the effects of climate change.
- Expansion would result in another unfunded mandate for NOAA and other government agencies.
- Approximately 28 percent the US EEZ in the Western Pacific Region has been established as no-take marine protected areas, which far exceeds any other region in the US. None of the other seven regions excludes even 1 percent of their US waters.