

NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEM RESERVE
RESERVE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Non-Government (Voting)

William Aila Jr. (Chair)
State of Hawai'i
Linda Paul (Vice Chair)
Conservation
Rick Gaffney (Secretary)
Recreational Fishing
Solomon Kaho'ohalahala
Native Hawaiian Elder
Halealoha Ayau
Native Hawaiian
Pelika Andrade
Native Hawaiian
Gail Grabowsky
Education
Phil Fernandez
Commercial Fishing
Cindy Hunter
Research
Don Schug
Research
Jean Kenyon
Research
Richard Lee
Ocean-Related Tourism
Kanoë Morishige
Conservation
Audrey Newman
Conservation
Judith Cucco
Citizen-at-Large

Government (Non-Voting)

Athline Clark
Papahānaumokuākea MNM
Allen Tom
*Hawaiian Islands
Humpback Whales NMS*
Hoku Ka'aekuahiwi-Pousima
NOAA Fisheries PIRO
Brandon Jim On
NOAA OLE
Brad Kaalelo Wong
Office of Hawaiian Affairs
Maile Norman
U.S. Coast Guard
Janice Fukawa
U.S. Department of Defense
Joshua DeMello
WPRFMC
Dan Polhemus
*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Ecological Services*
Jared Underwood
*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Refuges*
Brian Neilson
State of Hawai'i - DLNR

Meeting October 22, 2020

9:00am – 1:00pm

Via GoToWebinar

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES:

RAC Voting Members Present: William Aila Jr. (State of Hawai'i, Chair); Judith Cucco (Citizen-At-Large), Rick Gaffney (Recreational Fishing, Secretary); Gail Grabowsky (Education), Cindy Hunter (Research), Solomon Kaho'ohalahala (Native Hawaiian Elder), Jean Kenyon (Research), Richard Lee (Ocean-Related Tourism), Kanoë Morishige (Conservation), Audrey Newman (Conservation), Linda Paul (Conservation, Vice Chair), Don Schug (Research), Pelika Andrade (Native Hawaiian); and Halealoha Ayau (Native Hawaiian).

RAC Voting Members Absent: Phil Fernandez (Commercial Fishing).

RAC Non-Voting Members Present: Thorne Abbott (Conservation Alternate), Nakoā Goo (Native Hawaiian Alternate), Bonnie Kahape'a-Tanner (Native Hawaiian Alternate), Robert Leinau (Conservation Alternate), Athline Clark (NOAA/Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument [ONMS-PMNM]); Brad Wong (Office of Hawaiian Affairs), Brandon Jim On (NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Law Enforcement [NMFS-OLE]); Brian Neilson (State of Hawai'i/Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Aquatic Resources [DLNR-DAR]); Cynthia Vanderlip (State of Hawai'i/DLNR, Division of Forestry and Wildlife [DLNR-DOFAW]); Cindy Among- Serrao (for Allen Tom, NOAA/ONMS, Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary [HIHWNMS]); Janice Fukawa (Department of Defense, U.S. Navy [DOD-USN]); Joshua DeMello (Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council [WPRFMC]); Maile Norman (U.S. Coast Guard [USCG]); Dan Polhemus (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services [USFWS-ES]); Hoku Ka'aekuahiwi-Pousima (NOAA/NMFS, Pacific Islands Regional Office [PIRO]); Jared Underwood (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Refuges [USFWS-NWR]); Heather Howard (Education Alternate); and Jennifer Barrett (Citizen-At-Large Alternate).

RAC Non-Voting Members Absent: Allen Tom (NOAA/ONMS-HIHWNMS).

ONMS Leadership: Kristina Kekuewa (ONMS Regional Director-Pacific Island Region), Eric Roberts (ONMS-PMNM Deputy Superintendent).

ONMS Staff: Alyssa Miller, Andy Collins, Jenny Crawford, Jon Martinez, Justin Umholtz, and Malia Evans.

Members of the Public: Tammy Harp, John Burns, Mark Hixon, and Gail Clarke.

- I. CALL TO ORDER (Aila Jr.)
- II. REVIEW & APPROVAL OF AGENDA (Aila Jr.)

Superintendent Clark noted a change in the agenda that had been announced earlier. The items below had been added prior to the approval of the State of the Monument Report and are no longer necessary. These items were removed:

 - Potential Action: RAC Letter to Department of Commerce requesting status update on the State of the Monument Report
 - Potential Action: RAC Letter to John Armor on the State of the Monument Report
 - Due to schedules of key participants, Superintendent Clark requested that agenda item VI. Actions – RAC vote on proposed resolutions honoring members be moved to earlier on the agenda.
 - RAC approved agenda with change.
- III. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES (Aila Jr.)

A number of grammatical changes were recommended to the draft document. Meeting minutes were approved by the Council contingent upon amendments to these sections.
- IV. BRIEF REVIEW & SUMMARY: PREVIOUS ISSUES, ACTION ITEMS, AND STATUS (Clark)

In-Progress

- A. RAC/SAC Action: Letter to ONMS Director John Armor regarding Executive Orders 13792 and 13795. This item is presently on hold.
 - B. Fall Member Recruitment: October 1-31 – Superintendent Clark reminded everyone to help recruit for the following open seats. Staff will send out the list of all primaries and alternates. Also, if members are interested in being on the Selection Committee please let staff know. [Updated: Recruitment period extended to November 15]
 1. 2 Primary Seats – (1) Research and (1) Education
 2. 7 Alternate Seats – (3) Research, (1) Conservation, (1) Ocean-related Tourism, (1) Commercial Fishing, and (1) Native Hawaiian
 - C. State of Hawai‘i Action: Keep RAC informed on *30x30 Initiative*. This item was covered in the State’s report.
 - D. ONMS Action: Keep RAC informed of NFWF funding and activities. This item was covered in the ONMS co-manager report and presentation by Dr. John Burns.
 - E. NMFS Action: Keep RAC informed of any changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This item was covered in the NMFS co-manager report.
- V. MONUMENT CO-TRUSTEE/CO-MANAGEMENT AGENCY UPDATES
- A. NOAA-ONMS (Clark) See presentation posted at the PMNM website.
 - B. NOAA-NMFS (Ka‘aekuahiwi-Pousima) No updates on the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. NMFS Monuments Program is in process of publishing a strategic planning initiative. The strategy is heavily partner-focused. The Monuments Program is moving forward with the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument Management Plan. A Federal Register Notice of Availability will be released soon. A NMFS Technical Memorandum regarding Hawaiian Monk Seal Habitat was shared previously with the RAC. If there are any questions, please contact Ms. Ka‘aekuahiwi-Pousima. NMFS continues to seek ways to operationalize cruises to continue all its usual activities. The NOAA ship, *Oscar Elton Settee*, is currently in dry-dock.

- C. USFWS Refuges (Underwood) In the past few months, FWS has implemented safety protocols which included COVID testing prior to departure as well as quarantining upon arrival in the Monument. In August, FWS recently sent a crew to Nihoa to control invasive sandbur (*Cenchrus echinatus*) and conduct wildlife surveys. A second cruise deployed with multiple objectives. The main focus of the trip is to drop off 11 people to clean up hurricane debris and remove entrapment hazards at Tern Island, French Frigate Shoals (FFS), as well as conduct limited seal and turtle surveys. FWS will also send a biologist to survey the invasive algal cover to support existing collaborative satellite-based monitoring efforts, as well as check for coral bleaching. The vessel will also drop off supplies at Midway. Midway remains COVID-free. Access has been strictly limited, but projects continue, including biological restoration and seabird surveys. The seabird protection project is postponed until 2022 due to logistical uncertainties associated with COVID-19. Meanwhile, other control measures will continue to be used. The interim measures control but do not eradicate the mouse population. A barge will be leaving California next week bringing a new fire truck to Midway. The barge will also carry armour stone to repair the seawall that protects the runway. The armour stone will be washed and cleaned prior to transport. RAC members asked that, in the future, the FWS consider bringing stones from Hawai'i instead of the US mainland. FWS is presently conducting interviews to fill the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge manager position. Albatross reproductive monitoring will be conducted this season, however, a scaled-back sampling protocol will be used instead of complete census, using a half-crew.
- D. USFWS Ecological Services (Polhemus) Hawai'i Climate Change Indicators presentation. See presentation posted at the PMNM website. Key points: 1) 2020 is currently the second hottest year on record in the region; and could still end up as the hottest year ever. 2) as a result, the Northern Pacific Ocean has carried excess heat content through the summer, but most of it accumulated to the northeast of the Monument. 3) La Niña conditions are present and expected to persist through spring of 2021. This generally leads to cooler and wetter than average winters in Hawai'i. 4) There is a 60+% probability of some minor thermal stress to the Monument coral reefs this fall, but this probability is steadily declining as we head into winter. The Monument reefs will reach Bleaching Watch status, but severe bleaching seems unlikely. 5) No tropical cyclone events have occurred in the Monument this year, and no further are likely given the recent onset of a La Niña pattern. This is not favorable for Eastern Pacific cyclone formation, whereas high ocean heat content in the Atlantic produced a severe season there. 6) Sea level continues to rise at 3-5 mm per year, and this trend is increasing. Inundation is a long-term problem that will not go away, and may increase over time depending on future melting trends in Greenland and Antarctica. 7) Presenter was unaware of any studies conducted on the influence of the pandemic on carbon emissions. Superintendent Clark noted that the expedition currently in the Monument includes surveys for evidence of coral bleaching at French Frigate Shoals and Pearl & Hermes Atoll.
- E. State of Hawai'i – Department of Aquatic Resources [DAR] (Neilson) Mr. Neilson provided an update via email which was shared with the RAC. Key Points: 1) Regarding the *Marine 30x30 Initiative*: release of the Holomua Roadmap to 30x30 in November. Happy to share a draft if anyone is interested in reviewing and giving feedback by the end of the month. Will share a final plan at the next RAC meeting. 2) As part of the

Marine 30x30 Initiative, DAR plans to begin scoping meetings on State-wide protections for herbivorous reef fish (e.g. bag and size limits, gear restrictions, seasonal closures, etc.). Would welcome RAC members to spread the word and participate in the online scoping meetings. 3) In support of the *Marine 30x30 Initiative*, Arizona State University's [Global Airborne Observatory](#), conducted flights last February to map the main Hawaiian Islands' nearshore habitats using multi-spectral imagery and Lidar. High resolution maps of live coral, algae, bathymetry, and rugosity will be available to a depth of 22 meters, with hopes to get this data on the State GIS portal. They are also able to detect State-wide change in coral cover before/after the 2019 bleaching event. It would be amazing to see this type of technology deployed in the Monument.

- F. State of Hawai'i – Department of Forestry and Wildlife [DOFAW] (Vanderlip) Kure Report – The *Imua*, arriving at Midway on October 26-27, will transport the 4-person winter crew from Midway to Kure. Crew has been quarantining at Midway for 14 days. Crews have been removing invasives, controlling mosquitoes, monitoring seabirds, Laysan ducks, and monk seals. There have been lots of Laysan ducklings this year, and the population is approximately 78 individuals now. Outplanting for habitat restoration continues. Crews have conducted a study of vegetation cover and will report on that soon. Regarding facilities, crews made repairs to the solar-electrical system and replaced batteries. In December, DOFAW will hire a new field camp leader. The RAC's assistance in recruiting would be appreciated. Help with recruiting volunteers for summer camp in January and February would also be appreciated. Please see the [Kure Atoll Conservancy](#) website for more information as well as updates on work occurring at Kure. State of Hawai'i funding and NFWF funding are currently being applied for. Kure presently receives \$130,000 per year in support from the State of Hawai'i, plus office/administrative support.
- G. Office of Hawaiian Affairs [OHA] (Wong) Upcoming makahiki season. Lono is upon us, bringing needed rain. OHA has been working together with USFWS to salvage ka'upu from Midway to use for makahiki purposes. Ka'upu are being taxidermied with support from Bishop Museum. Expect a draft of *Mai Ka Pō Mai* to be released soon for agency review. This report will be important guidance for including a Hawaiian perspective in the Monument management. The Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group's (CWG) nomenclature working group has developed four new bird names and one new plant name. A press announcement will be released in a week or two. The group is making fact sheets for the Hawaiian bird names and will hold a webinar in November to present the names and provide information on the hui and the work that it does. OHA asks everyone to please vote. The OHA Board finalized the new OHA Strategic Plan. It will be released in the near future at <https://www.oha.org/priorities>.

VI. ACTIONS/DECISION-MAKING

- A. RAC vote on proposed resolutions honoring members
1. Judith Cucco, Citizen-At-Large Representative, introduced the “Resolution Honoring Dr. Gail Grabowsky for Her Service on the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve.” The Council unanimously voted to approve the Resolution.
 2. Don Schug, Research Representative, introduced the Resolution Honoring Dr. Cynthia “Cindy” Hunter for Her Service on the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve.” The Council unanimously voted to approve the Resolution.

VII. PRESENTATIONS

- A. NFWF funding & activities status update (Burns). See presentation posted at the PMNM website. Dr. Burns presented an overview of projects conducted in the Monument that were supported by a 2018 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant. A collaborative partnership of Bishop Museum & University of Hawai‘i conducted multidisciplinary research to determine how predicted environmental stressors will affect key species and habitats at Lalo (French Frigate Shoals). These studies help managers develop actionable strategies for the Monument and the wider Hawaiian archipelago. The goal of the project is to determine how changing climate conditions will impact: 1) low-lying sand and coral reef habitats and associated species, 2) mesophotic diversity, and 3) trophic connections between shallow and mesophotic coral ecosystems. The multitude of project outputs include significant findings on the development of dynamic islands at Lalo, a virtual exhibit, a 3D-printed exhibit at the Aquarium of the Pacific (Long Beach, CA), a visualization on the University of Hawai‘i Coral Health Atlas website, a documentary film entitled “The Kūpuna Islands”, many public outreach presentations, and over a dozen publications with more in progress. Some of the teams were awarded additional NFWF funding to continue their work.
- B. 2020 State of the Monument Report (Martinez) See presentation posted at the PMNM website. Dr. Martinez presented the newly released report’s structure and findings. The structure is based on a Pressure-State-Response (PSR) model and the content derives from answers to 12 questions relating to resource status and trends in three categories: physical resources, living resources, and heritage resources. Ranking criteria were developed for each question and applied by 40 subject matter experts. A summary of the report’s findings can be found at www.papahanaumokuakea.gov.
- C. Sanctuary Designation Process Status Update (Clark/Roberts) See presentation posted at the PMNM website. There have been multiple authorities calling for pursuing or considering National Marine Sanctuary designation, including Executive Order 13178 and Presidential Proclamation 9478. Some benefits of NMS designation are: 1) open and transparent process, 2) supplements and complements current designations, 3) permanency, 4) enhanced regulatory framework, enables penalty schedule, 5) more flexibility with advisory council, and 6) greater enforcement potential in the Monument Expanded Area. The steps to a NMS designation are: 1) scoping and proposal development (i.e. public comments, working group input); 2) sanctuary proposal which includes a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), draft management plan, and proposed regulations; 3) public review to consider DEIS alternatives; and 4) sanctuary designation through congress. The timeframe to complete the process averages from 2 ½ to 3 ½ years. Superintendent Clark noted it is important to understand that NMS would be an overlay of the Monument, and the existing designations won’t go away. A NMS allows permanency because it’s based on congressional action instead of presidential action. If the RAC would like to make a recommendation to our office (ONMS), we would need a formal recommendation. Representative Schug asked about the fishery management council’s role in the sanctuary designation process. Clark replied that this would provide an opportunity for the council to participate and make recommendations. Representative Schug asked if the current regulations and restrictions would still hold and how the fishing regulations would be developed. Clark replied that there are regulations in place within the original Monument boundaries, a framework that was developed through a public process and are in the code of federal regulations, and in that respect has some permanency. Additionally, NMSA Section 304(a)(5) allows for fishing regulations

that fulfill the goals and objectives of a sanctuary. There is an analysis under this law that was conducted for the original designation of the Monument. The WPRFMC representative DeMello noted that the findings of the cited analysis are posted at <https://nmsspahanaumokuakea.blob.core.windows.net/papahanaumokuakea-prod/media/archive/management/designation/pdfs/NWHIfindings.pdf>. Representative Newman asked if there might also be risks associated with the sanctuary designation process. Clark replied that it depends on what is proposed. Representative Kaho'ohalahala asked if the designation timeframe could be shortened. Clark replied that the lengthy timeline is largely due to statutory requirements, agency process and the public process. The council moved and approved to form a writing team that will provide the council a draft letter to ONMS supporting moving forward with National Marine Sanctuary designation. This team will be meeting within the next month and presenting their recommendations to the full council at the December 9, 2020 meeting for a vote on the letter. *Note: The writing team is comprised of Linda Paul, Don Schug, Solomon Kaho'ohalahala and Halealoha Ayau.*

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

IX. DECISION-MAKING, WRAP-UP AND CLOSING REMARKS

Superintendent Clark noted potential next steps for the rest of 2020; the need to set calendar meeting dates and potentially reconvene working groups and subcommittees. If you are interested in joining a working group and/or subcommittee, please contact Ms. Crawford. The council discussed a possible joint RAC/HHWNMS SAC meeting on January 12, 2021 to discuss cultural protocols relating to marine mammal strandings. This item will be further discussed at a later date.

Next RAC meeting dates are:

- December 9, 2020
- March 24, 2021
- June 9, 2021
- September 22, 2021