



# *Visitor Services Plan*

for

**Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge,  
the Battle of Midway National Memorial,**

and

**Papahānaumokuākea  
Marine National Monument's  
Midway Atoll Special Management Area**



Pete Leary/USFWS

*December 2008*



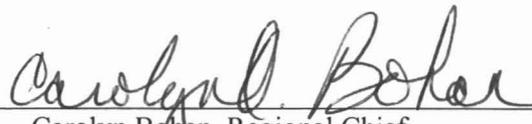
**Visitor Services Plan**  
for  
**Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge,**  
**Battle of Midway National Memorial,**  
and  
**Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument's**  
**Midway Atoll Special Management Area**

Prepared by:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and  
Pacific Islands Division of External Affairs and Visitor Services  
Box 50167  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96850

in consultation with the  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
and the  
State of Hawai'i

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Carolyn Bohan, Regional Chief  
National Wildlife Refuge System  
Pacific Region

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

12/10/08

Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, Battle of Midway National Memorial,  
and Midway Atoll Special Management Area  
Visitor Services Plan  
Approval Submission  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Region

In accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended, (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee) and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual Section 605, this visitor services plan has been prepared for Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and the Battle of Midway National Memorial. In addition, it is incorporated into the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Management Plan to guide visitor activities within the Midway Atoll Special Management Area. This visitor services plan is compliant with Presidential Proclamation 8031 and was prepared in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce by Honolulu-based National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration staff, the State of Hawai'i's Department of Land and Natural Resources, and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. This visitor services plan is submitted for approval by the Regional Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System for the Pacific Region.

Submitted by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan White, FWS Superintendent  
Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

11/21/08  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Barry W. Steglitz, Project Leader  
Hawaiian and Pacific Islands  
National Wildlife Refuge Complex

11/21/2008  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## **Executive Summary**

In 1996, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) prepared a public use plan to guide visitor services on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Since then, new laws and policies regarding wildlife-dependent recreation in the National Wildlife Refuge System have been promulgated, and a new visitor services plan is required to ensure recreational uses at Midway Atoll are compatible with the Refuge System mission and the purposes of the refuge and the Battle of Midway National Memorial. In addition, all recreational and special ocean use activities must be compliant with the requirements of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (Monument), designated in 2006.

This document was based on an interim plan to guide visitor activities on Midway Atoll until such time as the broader Monument Management Plan that meets the applicable requirements of a refuge comprehensive conservation plan and visitor services plan was completed. Although substantially the same as the Interim Visitor Services Plan for Midway Atoll, this plan is now a step-down plan to the overall Monument Management Plan. It was developed during initial implementation of the interim plan, and, therefore, evaluation and adaptive management of the visitor program is a key element of the Monument Management Plan's Midway Atoll Visitor Services Action Plan. FWS will continue to work closely with its Co-Trustees in the Monument, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and State of Hawai'i, as this visitor services plan is implemented.

This plan documents approved recreational activities at Midway Atoll and identifies the structure of the visitor services program. Special ocean uses that support recreational activities within the Midway Atoll Special Management Area are also addressed. The plan also outlines activities that honor and interpret the World War II history at Midway Atoll in recognition of its status as the Battle of Midway National Memorial, as well as opportunities to share the cultural significance of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument to Native Hawaiians. It discusses operational limitations, biological constraints, and partnership opportunities beyond Midway Atoll.

Since 1995, FWS has been strongly committed to welcoming visitors to Midway Atoll. This is the first and only remote island national wildlife refuge in the Pacific – and the only place within Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument – to provide the general public with an opportunity to learn about and experience these unique ecosystems. A regularly scheduled visitor program operated on Midway Atoll until early in 2002 but ended when our cooperator left the atoll. Since then, visitors have arrived almost exclusively by the occasional cruise ship or sailboat, or for a Battle of Midway commemorative event. Through this visitor services plan, we will begin to offer limited opportunities to expand the visitor program to allow more people to experience Midway's wildlife and historic treasury.

The following wildlife-dependent recreational uses have been determined to be compatible at Midway Atoll Special Management Area and National Wildlife Refuge: wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation, and participatory research. Hunting and fishing, two recreational uses normally given priority on national wildlife refuges when compatible, will not take place at Midway Atoll. All animal species are protected by law or occur in numbers too low for harvest to allow hunting opportunities. Recreational fishing is precluded under Presidential Proclamation 8031, which designated the Monument.

Additional compatibility determinations allow for beach use activities such as swimming and volleyball, nonadministrative airport operations, limited outdoor sports such as bicycling and jogging, and amateur radio use. Each compatibility determination includes stipulations necessary to ensure protection of Midway's natural and historic resources. Any additional activities that may be proposed within Midway

Atoll National Wildlife Refuge would need to be evaluated through the compatibility determination process with formal public review. Activities that are determined to be compatible are authorized through the issuance of Monument permits, which fall within six permit types: conservation and management, research, education, Native Hawaiian practices, special ocean uses, and recreation.

Goals, objectives, and strategies for the visitor program are discussed in Chapter 4 of this plan. FWS will encourage individual visitors as well as organized groups to come to Midway. Opportunities for educator workshops in environmental education, formal classes, and distance learning will be implemented as funding permits. Improvements to trails and installation of blinds will benefit wildlife observation and photography opportunities, as will snorkeling and guided kayaking tours. Although not expected to be available in the early years of the visitor program, a dive program will be instituted as soon as practicable. Onsite and offsite interpretation of Midway Atoll's historic and wildlife resources will be enhanced.

In order to ensure a high quality visitor experience using the limited infrastructure currently available, the total number of overnight visitors that would be allowed on Midway Atoll at any one time will be limited to 50 people as long as this visitor services plan is effective. This number of visitors may be exceeded for short duration (less than a day) prearranged visits by ocean vessels or aircraft. In these cases, visitor activities are closely supervised and primarily consist of guided tours or participation in commemorative events.

For the next 4 years (2008-2011), visitor programs will operate from November through July, which coincides with the albatross season on Midway. The months of August through October are reserved primarily for planned construction and major maintenance activities.

With no additional FWS funding available to support a visitor program, visitation at Midway Atoll must be financially self-sustaining. Fees reflecting current actual costs for transportation, lodging, food services, and visitor services staffing are included in this plan. Additional permitting requirements also are discussed.

For the initial stage of the visitor program, FWS intends to operate primarily with its own staffing and with help from Monument Co-Trustees and volunteers. Outside entities may be needed to provide assistance with marketing the program and to establish a dive program at Midway; these options will be evaluated over the coming 2 years. In the longer term, and based on the results of the evaluation required in the Monument Management Plan's Midway Atoll Visitor Services Action Plan, other operational designs may be instituted.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

On June 15, 2006, President George W. Bush established the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (Monument) by Proclamation 8031. The Monument incorporates the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge/Battle of Midway National Memorial, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, and State of Hawai‘i Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge and Seabird Sanctuary at Kure Atoll.

The Monument was established to protect the historic and scientific features of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and to enhance visitation in a special area around Midway Atoll (through the establishment of the Midway Atoll Special Management Area), provide for carefully regulated educational and scientific activities, preserve access for Native Hawaiian cultural activities, prohibit unauthorized access to the Monument, phase out commercial fishing over a 5-year period, and ban other types of resource extraction and dumping of waste.

Midway Atoll is located about 1,250 miles (2,012 km) northwest of Honolulu. It includes three small islands (Sand Island, 1,117 acres (452 ha); Eastern Island, 336 acres (136 ha); and Spit Island, 15 acres (6 ha)), an encircling protective coral reef, and submerged lands and waters out to the 12-nautical mile territorial seas (581,864 acres; 235,473 ha).

Midway Atoll is an unincorporated territory of the United States and is the only atoll/island in the Hawaiian archipelago not part of the State of Hawai‘i. Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge is owned and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on behalf of the American people and has international significance for both its historic and natural resources.

### **1.2 Human History**

Like on many of the low islands and atolls in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, the first visitors to what is now called Midway Atoll may have been Polynesians/Hawaiians exploring the Pacific in voyaging canoes. Unfortunately, no physical evidence of their visits remains, but oral histories and chants refer to distant low-lying islands with abundant birds and turtles. Native Hawaiians named the atoll “Pihemanu,” which means “the loud din of birds.”

Midway Atoll’s central location in the midst of the Pacific Ocean has made it a vital link in modern-day communication, transportation, and military history. The first recorded landing at Midway Atoll was made in 1859 by Captain N. C. Brooks. In 1867, the Secretary of the Navy sent Captain Reynolds to take possession of the islands for the United States. Efforts in the 1870s to open a channel in the reef were unsuccessful, and for the next 30 years visits to the atoll were limited to shipwreck survivors and bird feather collectors, who sought to satisfy the significant demand for feathers in the millinery trade. In January 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt placed the Midway Islands and environs “under the jurisdiction and control of the Navy Department” by Executive Order 199–A to stop the “wanton destruction of birds that breed on Midway.”

Midway’s role as an important communications link was established in 1903, when the Commercial Pacific Cable Company chose Sand Island for one of its relay stations. The cable link between Honolulu and Guam was completed on July 4, 1903, in time for President Roosevelt to send the first round-the-

world message wishing Americans a happy Independence Day. In 1905, the U.S. Lighthouse Service established a lighthouse on Sand Island.

In 1935, Pan American Airways established a seaplane base in the harbor and a small (but relatively luxurious) hotel on Sand Island. Midway became a regular fuel stop on a transpacific route that also included Honolulu, Wake Island, Guam, and Manila. The short-lived era of the “Clipper” seaplanes was an important chapter in aviation history.

Midway’s most significant historic role was as a military base. Military interest in Midway accelerated as World War II started in Europe. In 1941, the Naval Air Station was commissioned, altering the civilian character of Midway. On December 7, 1941, not only Pearl Harbor but Midway was attacked by the Japanese, who landed a direct hit on the power plant. First Lieutenant George Cannon was fatally wounded in the attack and became the first Medal of Honor recipient for the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II. On June 4, 1942, the atoll was again attacked, but the men stationed on the atoll played a significant role in the ensuing Battle of Midway, credited with turning the tide of the war in the Pacific. In July 1942, the Midway Submarine Advanced Base was formally established and operated until the end of World War II.

Though relatively quiet as a military base for several years after World War II, Midway’s importance returned in 1953 with the Cold War and the construction of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line. By 1958, Midway was an important part of the “Pacific Barrier,” which extended North America’s early warning system from Alaska to the mid-Pacific, and a significant construction program to support operations was underway. “Willy Victor” radar planes flew night and day as part of the DEW Line, and antenna fields covered the islands, part of an intricate chain of radar defenses. During the Vietnam War, Midway was one of the main aircraft and ship refueling stations, and it also hosted classified missile and submarine monitoring missions.

By the early 1990s, military activities significantly declined, replaced by new technologies and centralized operations. On October 1, 1993, Naval Air Facility Midway was operationally closed under the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990. Prior to the Navy’s departure in 1997, a massive cleanup effort removed all buildings and structures from Eastern Island, and many of the Cold War era buildings from Sand Island. A significant effort was made to remove the environmental contaminants left by more than 90 years of military operations. In transferring Midway to the FWS, the Secretary of the Navy remarked that Americans are “trading guns for goonies,” and a new era began.

### **1.3 Monument and Refuge History**

#### **1.3.1 Establishment of the Refuge, Memorial, and Monument**

FWS staff have been conducting research and/or assisting the Navy with wildlife management issues on Midway Atoll for almost 50 years. Cooperative projects increased in the 1970s, addressing issues such as rodent control and lead poisoning in seabirds. A cooperative management plan developed by the Navy and FWS in the early 1980s further defined responsibilities and eventually led to establishment of an “overlay” national wildlife refuge on Midway in 1988. As on other military bases with similar arrangements, the Navy retained primary jurisdiction, while FWS staff provided wildlife management assistance.

When Naval Air Facility Midway was identified for closure in 1993, the Navy began planning to transfer the atoll to the FWS. On October 31, 1996, President William Clinton signed Executive Order 13022, directing the Secretary of the Interior, through the FWS, to administer Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. The purposes of the refuge, as defined in the Executive order, are to maintain natural biological

diversity; conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats; fulfill international wildlife treaty obligations; provide opportunities for research, education, and compatible wildlife-dependent recreation; and recognize and maintain the atoll's historic significance.

On September 13, 2000, in accordance with language in the Fiscal Year 2000 Interior Appropriations Act, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt signed Secretary's Order 3217 designating the lands and waters of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge as the Battle of Midway National Memorial "so that the heroic courage and sacrifice of those who fought against overwhelming odds to win an incredible victory will never be forgotten."

On June 15, 2006, President George W. Bush established the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (Monument) by signing Proclamation 8031. The Monument provides immediate and permanent protection for the lands and waters associated with the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), including Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. According to the Proclamation:

The Secretary of Commerce, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will have the primary responsibility regarding management of the marine areas, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary of the Interior, through the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), will have sole responsibility for management of the areas of the Monument that overlay the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, the Battle of Midway National Memorial, and the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce.

As the only atoll currently open to public visitation in the Monument, Midway Atoll provides a window to the Monument.

### **1.3.2 Monument Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, and Management Goals**

#### ***Vision:***

To forever protect and perpetuate ecosystem health and diversity and the Native Hawaiian cultural significance of Papahānaumokuākea.

#### ***Mission:***

To carry out seamless integrated management to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of NWHI ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations.

#### ***Guiding Principles:***

The Monument shall be managed in a manner that:

- is consistent with the Vision and Mission;
- recognizes that the resources of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are administered by the Co-Trustees for the benefit of present and future generations;
- affirms that the NWHI and its wildlife are important, unique, and irreplaceable;
- honors the significance of the region for Native Hawaiians;
- honors the historic importance of the region;
- incorporates best practices, scientific principles, traditional knowledge, and an adaptive management approach;
- errs on the side of resource protection when there is uncertainty in available information on the impacts of an activity;
- enhances public appreciation of the unique character and environment of the NWHI;
- authorizes only uses consistent with Presidential Proclamation 8031 and applicable laws;

- coordinates with federal, state, and local governments, Native Hawaiians, relevant organizations, and the public; and
- carries out effective outreach, monitoring, and enforcement to promote compliance.

**Goals:**

- Goal 1. Protect, preserve, maintain, and where appropriate restore the physical environment and the natural biological communities and their associated biodiversity, habitats, populations, native species, and ecological integrity.
- Goal 2. Support, promote, and coordinate research, ecosystem characterization, and monitoring that increases understanding of the NWHI, improves management decisionmaking, and is consistent with conservation and protection.
- Goal 3. Manage and only allow human activities consistent with Proclamation 8031 to maintain ecological integrity and prevent or minimize negative impacts for long-term protection.
- Goal 4. Provide for cooperative conservation, including community involvement, that achieves effective Monument operations and ecosystem-based management.
- Goal 5. Enhance public understanding, appreciation, and support for protection of the Monument’s natural, cultural and historic resources.
- Goal 6. Support Native Hawaiian practices consistent with long-term conservation and protection.
- Goal 7. Identify, interpret, and protect Monument historic and cultural resources.
- Goal 8. Offer visitor opportunities at Midway Atoll to discover and appreciate the wildlife and beauty of the NWHI, enhance conservation, and honor its unique human history.

**1.4 Purpose and Need for the Visitor Services Plan**

This Visitor Services Plan is incorporated as Appendix C of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Management Plan to provide additional detail to implement the Midway Atoll Visitor Services Action Plan. It is based primarily on the Interim Visitor Services Plan approved on May 23, 2007, and incorporates the same compatibility determinations that were approved on that date (see Appendix D of the Monument Management Plan).

In 1996, FWS prepared a public use plan to guide visitor services on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Since then, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (an amendment to the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966) set new standards for visitor programs on refuges, and in 2006, new guidance was issued in the form of FWS Manual chapters regarding wildlife-dependent recreation. In accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended, and FWS guidance, this visitor services plan is required to ensure recreational uses are compatible with the Refuge System mission and the purposes, goals, and objectives of the refuge and national memorial. In addition, all recreational activities must be in compliance with Proclamation 8031 and its codifying regulations at 50 CFR Part 404.

This plan documents approved recreational activities at Midway Atoll and identifies the structure of the visitor services program. Special ocean uses that support recreational activities within the Midway Atoll Special Management Area are also addressed. The plan also outlines activities that honor and interpret the World War II history at Midway Atoll in recognition of its status as the Battle of Midway National Memorial, as well as opportunities to share the significance of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument to Native Hawaiian culture. It discusses operational limitations, biological constraints, and partnership opportunities beyond Midway Atoll.

This plan is partially based on experiences with Midway visitors since 1996, but also reflects new information and new requirements. In 2005, a *Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Program Market Analysis and Feasibility Study* was completed by Pandion Systems, Inc., of Gainesville, Florida, under contract to FWS. The complete study is available on the FWS Website at <http://www.fws.gov/midway>. This visitor services plan also reflects insights gained from their study.

Furthermore, Proclamation 8031 reinforced the importance of Midway as a vital link to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands ecosystem, especially as an opportunity for visitors to experience, learn about, and appreciate the area. This visitor services plan not only addresses various FWS policy requirements, but goes beyond those requirements and looks at Midway Atoll as a “window to the Monument.” Here visitors may learn about the broader Monument, and the interrelationships among the islands and the wildlife moving on, between, and among them, and the significance of the area to Native Hawaiian culture.

Since 1995, the FWS has been strongly committed to welcoming visitors to Midway Atoll. This is the first and only remote island national wildlife refuge in the Pacific to provide the general public with an opportunity to learn about and experience these unique ecosystems. With this visitor services plan, we rededicate our efforts to share the atoll’s wildlife and historic resources with the world.

### **1.5 Internal/External Issues**

In August 2007, as part of the Monument management planning process, the following issues were identified related to visitor use at Midway Atoll. These issues will all be addressed in the appropriate sections below and within pertinent sections of the Monument Management Plan.

<b>Midway Atoll NWR – Access and Permitting</b>	<i>What is the appropriate total number of people to visit, work, and volunteer on Midway?</i>	The Interim Visitor Services Plan identified up to 40 overnight visitors at one time and at least 300 visitors per year as appropriate given the current staffing and infrastructure. The proposed Co-Trustee operational hub at Midway Atoll, including new programs and staff, would further strain the island’s operational infrastructure and potentially increase wildlife disturbance. The MMP will propose establishing a carrying capacity and maximum number of people on Midway, a site plan for the allocation of land uses, and facilities needed to balance people and wildlife.
<b>Midway Atoll NWR – Interpretation</b>	<i>How will visitors be provided information to introduce and sensitize them to the fragile Midway atoll ecosystem and history? To what extent should new interpretive and educational exhibits be placed at Midway?</i>	The Midway Interim Visitor Service Plan offers several opportunities to interpret the natural and cultural features of the Monument, including guided tours, self-guided interpretive walks, guided boat trips, interpretive exhibits and signs, and programs and presentations focusing on wildlife, historic structures, artifacts, memorials, and key sites. The MMP will address expanding the current visitor program to represent the entire Monument.

	<i>To what extent should historic structures be preserved and restored for interpretation on Midway?</i>	The determination to preserve, restore, reuse, or demolish a given building has to be done case by case, as the state of each building, its relative historic importance, interpretive opportunities, and the cost to restore and maintain varies widely. Decisions will likely be controversial, as Midway means different things to different people. An appropriate balance of on-island and off-island interpretation is needed and will be further addressed in the MMP.
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During development of the Interim Visitor Services Plan, issues raised included the fee structure, natural resource protection, historical recognition, authorized uses, cruise ship impacts, visitor capacity, length of visits offered, and type of facilities offered, infrastructure capacity, and transportation. These issues and comments included within 6,282 letters, e-mails, or telephone calls were addressed in the final Interim Visitor Services Plan.

In April 2008, the Draft Visitor Services Plan was released for public review and comment as part of the Draft Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Management Plan. Some of the concerns raised in the 6,458 public comments on the draft plan focused on the visitor program, including potential human impacts and the biological carrying capacity of Midway Atoll, cumulative impacts over time, visitor program costs, incorporating education regarding the Monument’s significance to Native Hawaiians, preventing the introduction of alien species, expanding recreational activities, monitoring visitor impacts, and closing Midway to all tourism activities. These concerns are addressed within this final Visitor Services Plan and in Volume IV of the Monument Management Plan.

## **1.6 Local Setting**

### **1.6.1 Community Description**

Midway Atoll is so remote (about 1,250 miles from Honolulu, its nearest major city) that it must operate independently as its own small town. It provides its own power system, water treatment and distribution, facilities maintenance, sewage treatment, waste management systems, communications systems, and all the other operational necessities found in a small municipality.

The refuge is currently staffed by nine full-time FWS employees, one of whom is stationed in Honolulu. A few volunteers (normally one to four) assist the refuge staff in biological and habitat management activities. The atoll also hosts transient<sup>1</sup> researchers, other FWS employees, or U.S. Coast Guard personnel on an occasional basis. During “construction season,” from August through October, as many as 30 additional workers may be on the island. NOAA and the State of Hawai‘i will also base a small number of staff (8-10 people) on Midway, as outlined in the Monument Management Plan, 3.6.3, Coordinated Field Operations Action Plan and the Midway Conceptual Site Plan (Volume IV). The refuge has contracted with a private entity to operate the infrastructure of the atoll. The contractor currently has approximately 50 employees on Midway.

Island residents live in renovated Navy housing, including single family homes, duplexes, and Bachelor Officers Quarters (BOQ). One BOQ (known as Charlie Barracks), which contains 36 rooms, has been set aside for transient and visitor use. Almost all of the residents and transients eat at the “Clipper House,”

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<sup>1</sup> Transients include those coming to Midway Atoll for official duties, e.g., refuge employees, Co-Trustee staff, Coast Guard or other law enforcement entities, contractors, researchers, other federal or state employees, or other permitted personnel.

where three meals a day are served buffet style. Most supplies, particularly foodstuffs, are flown to the island on chartered aircraft. Approximately once a year, a barge brings in equipment, food, and supplies too large or heavy for the aircraft. Fuel to operate the generators and small vehicles and to refill chartered aircraft is brought by fuel barge about once a year. All fuel deliveries operate in compliance with FWS regulations and the Midway Atoll Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan.

Current funding to operate Midway Atoll comes from FWS, supplemented by Federal Aviation Administration funding that fully covers airport operations costs and a share of infrastructure operations costs. A small amount of funding is generated by other users of the atoll, such as other federal agencies conducting activities on Midway.

### **1.6.2 Travel Links**

The only means of accessing Midway Atoll are by air or vessel. Midway has a fully certified airport known as Henderson Airfield, maintained to standards specified in Federal Aviation Administration Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 139. Midway is used as a required emergency landing site for extended twin-engine operations (ETOPS) flights across the Pacific Ocean. Under current regulations, twin-engine aircraft must be within a maximum of 180 minutes from a Part 139 certified airfield in case of an emergency. Midway's 7,900-foot runway is capable of handling almost any type of aircraft.

As a Navy base, numerous facilities were built to support a variety of vessel types. Small boats can enter the inner harbor and moor dockside or in the harbor. Larger vessels resupplying the island and research vessels generally come into the cargo pier, inside Midway's lagoon but outside the inner harbor. Large passenger vessels are required to remain outside the reef and shuttle their passengers in via tenders due to port security requirements.

### **1.6.3 Visitor Services Opportunities (Beyond Midway)**

When Midway Atoll was opened to the public in 1995, it became the first and only remote refuge in the Pacific open to public visitation. The other islands in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are protected within the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge (from Nihoa to Pearl and Hermes Atoll) or in the State of Hawai'i's Seabird Sanctuary at Kure Atoll. Because of their fragility and sensitive wildlife, these other islands and atolls are all closed to public use.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve was established adjacent to and seaward of the seaward boundaries of the State of Hawai'i and Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in 2001, and is administered by NOAA. The area was under consideration for designation as a national marine sanctuary until the entire region was set aside as a Marine National Monument. As required in the Presidential proclamation establishing the Monument, special ocean uses such as ecotourism may be permitted outside the Midway Atoll Special Management Area if:

- the activity will directly benefit the conservation and management of the Monument;
- the activity is for research or education related to the resources or qualities of the Monument;
- the public is provided an opportunity to review the application for a special ocean use permit at least 30 days before the permit is issued; and
- the activity does not involve the use of a commercial passenger vessel.

The State of Hawai'i also administers submerged lands and waters out to 3 nautical miles from the islands and atolls except at Midway. In 2005, the State created a marine refuge in those waters with regulations prohibiting commercial and recreational fishing. Other uses (such as research, education, and Native Hawaiian cultural practices and subsistence fishing) are regulated by Monument permit.

Although numerous visitor opportunities exist in the main Hawaiian Islands or at other islands in the Pacific, none offer the unique combination of natural and historic resources found at Midway Atoll.

## **Chapter 2 Significant Features**

### **2.1 Terrestrial Resources**

Humans have greatly changed Midway Atoll from its original form. Only Spit Island has the general terrestrial habitat characteristics of an undisturbed atoll island, though it probably formed as an unintended result of channel dredging. Although the combined effects of dredging and filling, seawall construction, and importation of soil and many nonnative plant species has greatly expanded and altered the original acreage of Midway, it is still a wildlife habitat of worldwide importance.

The earliest botanical descriptions of Midway were made in 1902. Since then, 222 different plant species have been identified. Twenty-eight species are native and 2 are questionably indigenous to Hawai‘i. One plant species, *Cenchrus agriminoides* var. *laysanensis*, is listed as endangered, but it has not been observed on Midway since the early 1900s. More than 190 exotic species are found on Midway, including some that are invasive and affect wildlife habitat. Ecological restoration efforts are underway to eradicate the worst invasive plants, control others, and revegetate with native species.

Since the first insect (a moth) was described from Midway in 1894, more than 300 species of arthropods and land snails have been found on Midway, most introduced aliens.

Almost 2 million breeding seabirds of 19 species make Midway one of the most important breeding areas of seabird conservation in the Pacific. Midway hosts the world’s largest populations of both the Laysan albatross (452,609 nesting pairs in 2007) and black-footed albatross (25,320 nesting pairs). Midway’s breeding populations of white terns, black noddies, and red-tailed tropicbirds constitute the largest colonies in the Hawaiian archipelago. After eradication of rats in the mid-1990s, the Bonin petrel colony at Midway has rebounded to more than 32,000 pairs. One or two endangered short-tailed albatrosses generally visit Midway each year, although none have nested since the 1960s.

In 2004, 20 endangered Laysan ducks were transported to Midway from their home at Laysan Island in the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge. Biologists hope to establish a second “insurance” population of this endemic duck. The birds adapted well to the seeps created on Sand Island and surprised biologists by breeding during their first year, with 12 ducklings successfully fledging. An additional 22 ducks were transported to Midway in 2005, most of which were introduced to Eastern Island. By the end of 2007, almost 200 Laysan ducks were living on Midway Atoll.

Midway also serves as an overwintering area for several arctic migrant shorebirds, including the rare bristle-thighed curlew. The availability of predator-free islands on which this large shorebird can spend its nonbreeding season is essential, because they become flightless during their molt. Many other migratory birds also visit Midway, some regularly and some rarely.

### **2.2 Marine Resources**

Midway Atoll is one of the northernmost coral atolls in the world, presenting a unique opportunity to study the effect of colder waters on the growth, development, and ecology of coral reefs. Its neighbor, Kure Atoll, is the northernmost atoll in the world. Midway Atoll drops off steeply outside the barrier reefs, making it possible to observe in a relatively small area the different organisms and communities associated with pelagic, reef crest, ocean facing reef slope, deep reef, and lagoon habitats.

The lagoon is filled with dense networks of linear reticulated and circular reefs that trap sand washed over the northeastern reef rim. As in many atoll lagoons, sediments limit coral growth at Midway except in the

deeper central lagoon where a modest amount of finger coral gardens still exists. Meadows of seagrass are common in the lagoon, as are rock-boring urchins, calcareous green algae, and brown turban algae. The deep southern ship channel between the ocean and lagoon was dredged during the World War II era and has substantially modified circulation and lowered lagoon water levels. Together with lagoon reefs, these changes reduced or blocked water circulation in much of the lagoon and created higher levels of turbidity. Coral bleaching episodes were reported in 2000 and 2004 at Midway and the neighboring atolls of Kure and Pearl and Hermes. Lagoon lobe and finger corals have declined during the past decade, although blue encrusting coral continues to thrive.

Massive spurs and grooves consisting mostly of coralline algae face the open ocean along the northwest to southwest perimeter reefs and protect the atoll from heavy wave action common during the winter months. These massive reefs offer evidence of the importance of coralline algae as a major reef builder in the far end of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Corals on ocean facing reef habitats are generally not as abundant compared to neighboring atolls to the southeast, but are common in a few sheltered reefs and especially on shallow back-reefs and lagoon pinnacles. High concentrations of the rock-boring urchin *Echinometra* are presently eroding much of the shallow perimeter reef crests dominated by coralline algae. Although not grazing corals directly, the sea urchins are hollowing out the dead interior skeletons of living lobe corals and undermining other attached corals.

A total of 32 species of stony coral have been recorded at Midway, mostly *Pocillopora*, *Porites*, and *Montipora*, plus one zoanthid soft coral, *Palythoa*. Blue encrusting coral tentatively identified as *Montipora* cf. *turgecens* occurs in spectacular formations in the lagoon and back reef habitats and may be endemic to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

The first systematic marine invertebrate survey was conducted at Midway in 1997. It documented 316 invertebrate species, 250 of which had not been previously recorded at Midway. Crustaceans were the dominant macroinvertebrates, composing 46 percent of the total species.

More than 100 species of algae are known from Midway, including 35 previously unrecorded species at Midway and 1 seaweed species new to science, *Dudresnaya babbittiana*. One alien algae, one alien fish (blueline snapper), and four alien marine invertebrate species are established at Midway as found in 2000-2003 surveys. Incidental observations of two other introduced species, blacktail snapper and bluespotted grouper, have occurred at Midway in the last decade.

A total of 266 species of fish, including 7 pelagic species, have been recorded at Midway. Some of these species are either not found in the main Hawaiian Islands or are very rare. Despite its low species diversity, Midway's reef fish biomass is higher than in the main Hawaiian Islands, largely due to lower fishing pressures. Midway and its neighboring atolls have the highest rates of endemic reef fishes within the archipelago, with up to 52% of all fish observed being endemic species.

Many Midway species grow to larger than average size. All trophic levels are well represented, including jacks and four species of sharks. Several species of fish found elsewhere only in deep waters are found at shallow diving depths at Midway, including the endemic Hawaiian black grouper (hapu'upu'u).

Threatened Hawaiian green turtles are frequently seen inside the lagoon and basking on beaches. No turtle nesting had been documented until successfully hatched eggs were discovered on Spit Islet in July 2006. High surf uncovered the eggs, which probably hatched in 2005. In 2007, a successful sea turtle nest was documented on Sand Island. Endangered hawksbill sea turtles are infrequently seen in the lagoon. About 65 endangered Hawaiian monk seals are usually present at Midway at any one time, and pupping levels have increased significantly since 1996, with a record number of 17 in 2004. However, as

is common throughout the Hawaiian Islands, survivorship of juveniles is low and contributes to the endangered status of the species. In an effort to increase survivorship, NOAA-Fisheries established a captive care program on Sand Island in 2006. Six females were released in March 2007.

Approximately 200-300 Hawaiian spinner dolphins rest within Midway's lagoon and forage outside the atoll. Bottlenosed, striped, spotted, and rough-toothed dolphins may occasionally be seen in the open ocean, as well as beaked, pilot, and endangered humpback whales.

## **2.3 Historic Resources**

### **2.3.1 Early Cultural Resources Investigations**

Study of Midway's heritage resources was initiated in 1986 by the National Park Service when it conducted a survey of World War II-era properties eligible for designation as a National Historic Landmark. Nine structures, all defensive positions on the west side of Sand Island, were identified on Midway that convey a close association with the pivotal Battle of Midway, including ammunition magazines (ARMCO huts), a pillbox, and gun emplacements. Later that year, the nine defensive positions on Sand Island identified as eligible by the National Park Service and surrounding buffer areas were designated as a landmark.

Between 1992 and 1994, the Navy sponsored studies of the Naval Air Facility on Midway, including archival research, interviews, and field surveys. The initial field effort consisted of an architectural history survey of the structures, buildings, and objects located on Sand and Eastern Islands.

The study of Cold War Resources was conducted in 1993-94 by contractors hired by the Department of the Navy in order to identify the most important Cold War-era resources, even though they were less than 50 years old, as part of the Base Closure process. The historian hired to conduct the inventory, research, and make recommendations regarding the significance of the buildings on Midway was a specialist in the Cold War period. The Cold War-era buildings were constructed on Midway between 1957 and 1969. The recommendation accepted by the Navy was that the Cold War-era buildings and structures on Midway lacked architectural merit, were not directly associated with President Nixon's visit, and do not convey a direct link to the events that occurred during the Cold War. The Navy subsequently demolished many of the Cold War-era buildings and structures prior to the transfer to the FWS.

In addition to the landmark structures, 69 buildings, structures, and objects associated with the 1903-1945 historic period on Sand and Eastern Islands were determined to be eligible according to criteria established for the National Register. The properties evaluated as significant are associated with three major themes: colonization, initial years of base construction and the Battle of Midway, and 1942-1945 base construction.

Archaeological surveys of Sand and Eastern Islands were conducted in 1992 and 1994. Surface inspections, 68 subsurface core samples, and 5 shovel-test units revealed no evidence of Polynesian/Hawaiian or pre-1900 historic period cultural remains. A literature review of Hawaiian legends found numerous references to distant low-lying islands with abundant birds and turtles but no clear tie to Midway. However, like many low islands and atolls in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, Midway may have been visited by Polynesians/Hawaiians in their extended travels. Prior to extensive military-era construction, these islands were periodically scoured by storms and high winds that may have removed or buried evidence of use.

### **2.3.2 Programmatic Agreement and Treatment of Midway’s Historic Properties**

In 1996, the Navy’s Pacific Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command; the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; and FWS signed a programmatic agreement directing how Midway Atoll’s historic properties were to be treated during the closure of Naval Air Facility Midway. These properties were assigned to one of six categories of preservation treatment: reuse and maintain, secure and abandon in place, abandon in place and leave as is, fill or cover, relocate, or demolish. FWS was required to prepare a long-term Historic Preservation Plan, which it completed in 1999.

### **2.3.3 Historic Preservation Plan**

The June 1999 *Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge Historic Preservation Plan* defines a program to integrate historic preservation planning with the wildlife conservation mission of FWS at Midway Atoll. The plan focuses on the long-term management conditions and goals for preserving and stabilizing historic properties. It also recommends procedures for treating new discoveries, caring for museum collections, and implementing a visitor program that includes historic preservation work. The plan will be revised and updated over the coming year. In the future, the Co-Trustees will incorporate submerged cultural resource protection into such plans.

## **Chapter 3    Limitations on the Visitor Program**

### **3.1    Visitor Access**

The wildlife treasury that makes Midway Atoll so special for visitors also requires certain restrictions be placed on visitors for the protection of plants and animals. As on all national wildlife refuges, wildlife takes priority. Albatross nesting within the main housing areas of Sand Island continues successfully, even in the presence of human residents, but management measures are necessary to control human access to the nesting habitat of more sensitive bird species and the beach areas frequented by monk seals and sea turtles.

To maximize visitor safety and minimize wildlife disturbance and habitat degradation, land-based visitor activities (other than walking, bicycling, and refuge manager-approved interpretive programs) will be restricted to daylight hours (legal sunrise to legal sunset), and water-based to ½-hour after legal sunrise to ½-hour before legal sunset. Vessels involved in the visitor program must return to dock at least 1 hour before sunset to allow sufficient time for search and rescue operations if necessary.

To prevent disturbance of petrel and shearwater burrows, visitors and residents will be required during their initial orientation and through appropriate handout material to remain on paved or gravel roads and designated trails. The trails that are open for visitor use will be clearly marked on maps (see Figure 3.1.1). North Beach from Rusty Bucket to the old fuel farm is considered a ‘trail.’

All of the beaches on the western half of Sand Island are closed to public access to protect Hawaiian monk seals from disturbance, although there will be opportunities for beach viewing access from a primitive walking trail to designated viewing sites. “Turtle Beach,” located on the eastern side of Sand Island from the old seaplane ramp to Cross Point and several wetlands inhabited by endangered Laysan ducks are also closed to visitors. For visitor safety, the fuel farm and active airport runways are closed to the public, except for designated crossing points on the runways.

Spit Island is closed to all public access, and Eastern Island is open only to visitors with FWS or FWS-trained escorts on scheduled trips. Since 1988, all beach areas (including all beach crest vegetation to its deepest extent inland), lagoon waters, and ocean waters to a depth of 20 fathoms – except on Sand Island and its harbor – have been designated critical habitat for Hawaiian monk seals. Power boats engaged in recreational activities are not allowed within buffer areas of at least 500 feet around Eastern, Spit, and most of Sand Island (see Figure 3.1.2), although they may transit to the pier on Eastern Island for interpretive tours and volunteer work. No visitors will be allowed to come in contact with coral reefs. Water activities will avoid preferred monk seal and sea turtle resting habitat areas on these reefs.

To protect threatened and endangered species, visitors are required to remain at least 150 feet away from Hawaiian monk seals, short-tailed albatrosses, and sea turtles on land or in the water. This distance is recommended under Watchable Wildlife guidelines. Disturbance or harassment of these species is a violation of the Endangered Species Act. Collection of live or dead wildlife, including feathers, bones, eggs, shells, and coral, also is prohibited under 50 CFR 27.61. Objects of antiquity are similarly protected from removal under 50 CFR 27.62, and military shipwrecks and aircraft wrecks are also protected under the Sunken Military Craft Act of 2005 and other statutes.

All visitor activities allowed under this visitor services plan, as authorized by compatibility determinations, will occur within the Midway Atoll Special Management Area. No excursions beyond that boundary will occur.





Refuge staff and volunteers are working diligently to remove invasive species from Midway Atoll. Although the battle is far from won, we want to ensure no additional invasive species – particularly plants and insects – are inadvertently introduced to the atoll, or conversely, taken from Midway and introduced into Hawai‘i or elsewhere. To help prevent this, an inspection program will be implemented both before departure from Honolulu and before departure from Midway. In addition, visitors going to Eastern Island will be asked to check their gear for mice before departure to prevent accidental introductions. Prior to returning to Sand Island, they will be asked to clean their shoes, clothing, and gear to prevent spread of the invasive black mustard onto Sand Island.

Passengers arriving by vessel are required to clean their footwear before coming ashore. Sailboats are inspected by FWS staff upon arrival and before docking to ensure they are rat free.

In addition, all permitted vessels must have their hulls inspected and cleaned when required, including the visual inspection of anchors and tender vessels. Proclamation 8031 prohibits the release of ballast water within the Special Management Area. Protocols have also been developed and will be enforced for the treating of snorkel and dive gear to prevent the inadvertent introduction or transmission of alien species.

To minimize conflicts between aircraft and birds in flight, all visitor flights from November through July will be scheduled to arrive and depart Midway at night, unless specifically authorized by the refuge manager.

### **3.2 Visitor Capacity and Scheduling**

Many of Midway’s infrastructure systems (i.e., water, sewer, power generation) were originally designed to service a population of up to 5,000 individuals. However, Sand Island’s current population of FWS employees and volunteers, contractors, etc., is fewer than 100 people. FWS is concluding several millions of dollars of construction downsizing the primary infrastructure systems in order to create long-term efficiencies. These new, more economical and efficient systems are designed to support a population of no more than 200 individuals, including interagency personnel, volunteers, researchers, and visitors engaged in any activity. In addition, the infrastructure downsizing will be done in a manner that incorporates the latest in environmentally sustainable technologies.

In order to ensure a quality visitor experience using the limited infrastructure currently available, the total number of overnight visitors allowed on Midway Atoll at any one time will be limited to no more than 50 people. At the time of writing, a maximum of 24 rooms are available for visitors, which may be more restrictive than the 50 person limit depending on multiple occupancies of the same rooms. All visitors must stay in existing facilities; the policy to disallow camping continues due to potential impacts on wildlife habitat and the species themselves. Although visitors arriving by sailboat will not require rooms, they will still be counted toward the total number of overnight visitors since they may require other infrastructure support such as fresh water and food. In addition to lodging, other factors such as the number of visitors who can be accommodated on the aircraft and in our dining facility limit the total number of visitors.

Due to other infrastructure or visitor safety limitations, all visitors may not be able to engage in the same activity at one time (e.g., snorkel boat capacity, a limited number of approved guides, etc.). Children are welcome at Midway, though parents are cautioned that limited medical facilities are available in this remote location. Parents will be responsible for monitoring their children’s activities.

The 50-visitor limit may be exceeded for short duration (less than a day) prearranged visits by ocean vessels or aircraft. In these cases, visitor activities are closely supervised and primarily consist of guided tours or participation in commemorative events.

For the next 4 years (2008-2011), visitor programs will operate from November through July, which coincides with the albatross season on Midway. To ensure the safety of visitors and enhance their experience on Midway, visitor programs will be concentrated in this 9-month timeframe. The months of August through October are reserved for planned construction and major maintenance activities. Very few rooms will be available during these months due to the number of contractors on island, and aircraft capacity will be needed both for contractors and supplies.

### **3.3 Monitoring Visitor Impacts**

Midway Atoll Monument staff will monitor the impacts of visitors and other users on wildlife and historic resources to ensure continuing compatibility, as required by Monument and FWS policies. Monitoring methodology to assess impacts on seabirds, Hawaiian monk seals, sea turtles, corals, and fishes has been developed by the refuge biologist based on previous work on other refuges and protected areas, in consultation with the Co-Trustees. The visitor program supervisor, in consultation with the FWS and NOAA cultural resources program staffs, will monitor impacts on historic resources. Impact monitoring of marine resources will be conducted in partnership with NOAA using the multiagency monitoring protocols developed collaboratively since 2000.

Based on FWS experience from 1996-2002, when up to 100 overnight visitors were allowed on Midway at any one time, we anticipate few impacts as long as visitors comply with refuge and Monument rules and regulations. A refuge officer has been hired to enforce these rules and regulations, as well as to assist with coordinated law enforcement throughout the Monument. Additional refuge officers may be detailed to Midway for special events or activities. Under the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, the refuge manager has the authority to close areas, halt activities, or restructure visitor programs if necessary to protect wildlife or historic resources or to ensure a quality visitor program.

### **3.4 Midway Atoll Law Enforcement Activities**

Lands within the National Wildlife Refuge System are generally considered strict liability lands, where the visitor is responsible for knowing the rules. Because of the “closed until open” concept of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended, everything is initially prohibited. Because activities conducted in the Monument are prohibited without an appropriate permit, this same concept applies. A refuge may be opened to particular uses or a suite of uses through a finding of appropriateness, when required, and approved compatibility determinations. The public may then be notified of this opening through one of several mechanisms found in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations 25.31: conspicuously posted signs, special regulations published in 50 CFR 26.33, maps, or other appropriate methods that give the public actual or constructive notice of the permitted activity.

At Midway, the public review and comment period associated with development of the interim visitor services plan, as well as issuance of this plan, serve as constructive notice to the visitor under the strict liability standard. Additionally, the mandatory visitor orientation presentation within 24 hours of arrival; visitor access maps provided at that orientation, posted throughout the island, and contained in information notebooks in each room; signs; and other information found within the information notebooks located in each hotel room provide the visitor with additional actual or constructive notice.

A visitor found in violation of these rules may be issued a Notice of Violation, or arrested in the most serious cases. A Notice of Violation usually includes an option for paying a fine under an established Forfeiture of Collateral Schedule or appearing in court before a Magistrate Judge. In addition, depending on the violation, other applicable laws and penalties will apply.

Monument permits will incorporate all applicable requirements, and the signed Monument permit also serves as actual notice of these requirements.

## Chapter 4 Visitor Services Standards

### 4.1 Welcome and Orient Visitors

“We will assure that refuges are welcoming, safe, and accessible. We will provide visitors with clear information so they can easily determine where they can go, what they can do, and how to safely and ethically engage in recreational and educational activities. Facilities will meet the quality criteria defined in [policy]. We will treat visitors with courtesy and in a professional manner.”  
*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1*

*Goal 8. Offer visitor opportunities at Midway Atoll to discover and appreciate the wildlife and beauty of the NWHI, enhance conservation, and honor its unique human history.*

**Objective 1 Provide visitor opportunities for at least 500 overnight visitors annually, with no more than 50 overnight visitors at any one time.**

*Strategy 1.1* By June 2009 and based on a completed Midway Conceptual Site Plan, seek funding to establish additional housing opportunities for individuals and groups.

*Strategy 1.2* By December 2010, seek larger capacity aircraft to service Midway Atoll on a regular basis.

*Strategy 1.3* Limit the total number of overnight visitors to no more than 50 at any one time to match the existing infrastructure, ensure a quality program, and limit impacts to wildlife.

*Strategy 1.4* Work with private and educational groups to arrange facilitated visits to Midway.

*Strategy 1.5* Offer a minimum of four 3- to 7-day visits annually for independent travelers to come to Midway on less structured visits.

*Discussion:* The limit of no more than 50 overnight visitors on Midway at any one time reflects the limited capacity of our means of transportation and island infrastructure. While Strategy 1.2 is to continue to seek a larger capacity aircraft to service Midway Atoll, our Fiscal Year 2008 aircraft charter company operates a Gulfstream G-1 aircraft with 19 seats and a weight capacity of 3,200 pounds. Therefore, it is likely that no more than 15 seats will be available on any flight. In general, visitor groups will be transported on separate charter flights from those that bring food; mail; supplies; repair parts; and FWS, contractor, and Co-Trustee staff to and from the atoll. Most visits will be for one week at a time, although occasionally a shorter-term visit may be offered.

Of the 36 rooms in our guest lodging facility (Charlie Barracks), 24 rooms generally will be available for overnight guests at any one time (except from August through October). The remaining rooms may occasionally be available, but often will be occupied by off-island staff, Co-Trustee staff, and contractors. The seating capacity at Midway’s dining facility is likewise limited. Although meal times can be staggered to accommodate larger numbers of people on island, aircraft seating and lodging still limit the size of the program.

FWS Monument staff, in coordination with NOAA, will evaluate other types of aircraft that could safely and more cost-effectively transport visitors to Midway Atoll. We will work with the Department of the Interior's Office of Aircraft Services and NOAA's Marine and Aviation Operations office to identify suitable potential bidders for an aircraft charter service. Our goal would be to be able to transport 25-30 visitors to and from Midway per flight. We also continue to evaluate the island infrastructure to identify additional needs for visitor housing, food services facilities, etc., for future planning and budget development purposes.

Since 2002, various private groups have inquired about the possibility of bringing structured groups of people to Midway for 2 to 7-day visits. FWS will encourage such visits, working with the organizers to arrange trips in the most cost-efficient manner possible. These groups will be led by a FWS-approved guide who has been thoroughly briefed in refuge and Monument rules and regulations, and all proposed activities on Midway Atoll will be approved in advance by the refuge manager in compliance with Monument regulations and necessary permit conditions.

Although most visits would be part of structured programs, we intend to offer at least four 3- to 7-day periods annually when individuals may come to Midway to enjoy the atoll's historic and wildlife resources in a less structured manner. Such visitors would participate in available guided activities but would not be with an organized group. All of the rules and restrictions that apply to other visitors would apply to independent travelers. These independent travelers would require more oversight by Monument employees than organized groups, but still deserve the opportunity to visit their public lands.

***Objective 2*** On an annual basis, provide up to three day-long visitor opportunities for larger groups of people to learn about and enjoy Midway Atoll's distinctive wildlife and historic resources.

*Strategy 2.1* Continue to allow up to three opportunities each year for groups of 50-800 visitors to participate in day-long special events and walking tours.

*Discussion:* For the past several years, Midway has hosted from one to four large groups of visitors to learn about the atoll's wildlife and historic resources. In addition, visitors have the opportunity to learn about the Monument's Native Hawaiian cultural significance. These groups have ranged in size from 250 to 1,800 people. These groups may arrive via aircraft or passenger vessels. All groups must meet all Monument findings and requirements as specified in Presidential Proclamation 8031 and 50 CFR 404.11, including obtaining the appropriate (usually Special Ocean Use) Monument permit. In order to protect Midway's natural and historic resources, while still providing limited opportunities for group visitation, the Monument Management Board will approve no more than three permits for large groups (ranging in size from 50 to 800), and as in the past, all visits will be related to the atoll's wildlife and historic resources. In addition, no more than 400 visitors will be allowed to come ashore at any one time, unless refuge management has approved a higher number (e.g., for very limited and special circumstances such as to participate in a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the Battle of Midway).

These large-group visits are generally scheduled months in advance of the visit. In order to ensure these short-term visits do not conflict with overnight visitors, we will make every effort to avoid scheduling overnight visitor trips at times when large day-long groups will be present.

Because Midway does not have the infrastructure to support such large groups overnight, they typically arrive after sunrise and spend from 8 to 12 hours on Sand Island. Group sponsors provide water and food for their passengers and remove all trash generated by the visit from the atoll upon departure. Prior to arrival, passengers participate in an orientation session to ensure a safe visit for both humans and wildlife.

They also learn during these orientations about the natural and historic resources of Midway Atoll as well as of the broader Monument, and about the cultural significance of the NWHI to Native Hawaiians.

Passenger vessels bringing large groups of visitors to Midway remain outside of the southern reef at the channel entrance and offload their passengers in groups of up to 100 in the ships' tenders. These small boats come into the inner harbor, where the passengers disembark and are divided into groups for a 2-3 hour interpretive walking tour along existing roads and trails to specific sites where Monument staff, National Park Service, or volunteer interpreters provide informative talks. Tour guides from the ship accompany each group to ensure the passengers remain on the clearly marked guided tour route. Visitors return to the vessel at the end of their tours. No more than 400 passengers will be allowed ashore at any one time, unless refuge management has approved a larger number to participate in a special event (e.g., a special ceremony commemorating the Battle of Midway).

In addition to Monument permit conditions such as hull inspections, specific vessel monitoring systems, and discharge limitations, the refuge requires specific conditions be met by passenger vessels. These passenger vessel requirements are included in Appendix I (Operational Protocols) of the Monument Management Plan and include such conditions as arrival and departure times, port security requirements, and additional staff requirement costs at Midway Atoll that must be covered by the vessel company.

Monument staff who assist in providing interpretation for the visitors and monitor their activities while on Midway typically accompany passengers arriving by aircraft. Groups of approximately 25 people each are guided along existing roads and trails from one interpretive station to the next through maps and signage. During albatross season, aircraft are not permitted to depart until after sunset to reduce the potential risk to albatross and humans.

***Objective 3 Provide visitor opportunities for private sailboat crews.***

*Strategy 3.1* Continue to allow private sailboat crews with prior approval to stop at Midway Atoll and moor in the inner harbor. All sailboats must obtain a Monument permit and meet Monument requirements during their voyage.

*Discussion:* Although the number of sailboats visiting Midway Atoll varies from year to year, the average number seeking prior permission to land is about five per year. Midway Atoll is not en route to normal sailboat destinations in the Pacific, and due to prevailing winds and currents, it is difficult to sail from Midway back to Honolulu. Those that do come to Midway generally stay only a few days, remaining overnight on their vessels. Occasionally they eat some of their meals at the Clipper House dining facility.

***Objective 4 Ensure all visitors feel welcome, enjoy a safe experience, and understand refuge and Monument rules and regulations during their stay on Midway Atoll.***

*Strategy 4.1* Ensure visitors with disabilities feel welcome at Midway and enjoy a quality experience. Opportunities to improve existing facilities for the disabled will be evaluated within 1 year and funding for improvements will be sought thereafter.

*Strategy 4.2* Ensure all visitors arriving at Midway Atoll receive advance materials regarding the sensitivity of Midway's resources and participate in a mandatory orientation briefing within 12 hours after their arrival.

*Strategy 4.3* On an ongoing basis, maintain notebooks in each visitor room with maps and information on safety, wildlife viewing etiquette, regulations, and emergency contacts.

*Strategy 4.4* Staff the visitor center at least 4 regularly scheduled hours a day during workweeks so that visitors can ask questions and seek additional information.

*Strategy 4.5* By June 2015, complete installation of directional, regulatory, and interpretive signage as proposed in the Midway interpretive plan and sign plan.

*Strategy 4.6* Continue monitoring visitor satisfaction surveys on a weekly basis, adjusting the visitor program, visitor facilities, and maintenance schedules as appropriate.

*Strategy 4.7* By March 2009 and biennially thereafter, assess the results of monitoring visitor activities for impacts to wildlife and historic resources, level of visitor satisfaction, financial stability of the program, level of staffing, and program structure resulting in recommendations for improvement.

*Strategy 4.8* Based on the assessment above, seek funding, authority, or other needs to implement the recommendations.

*Discussion:* Opportunities to enhance accessibility for all visitors will be sought throughout implementation of the visitor program. Wheelchair-accessible lodging is currently available for visitors in Bravo Barracks on Sand Island. The boardwalk leading to the dining facility also is accessible. Due to Sand Island's mostly flat terrain, most of the roads are passable for all visitors. A review of Midway's facilities with particular attention to their accessibility was completed in 1997 and another will be conducted within the next year.

Advance materials will be provided to registered visitors with helpful hints about what to bring to Midway, how to avoid introducing new invasive species, how to avoid disturbing wildlife, and what to expect on the atoll. Since 1995, all visitors arriving at Midway Atoll have been required to attend a mandatory orientation session led by FWS personnel, even those who may have participated in a pre-trip briefing. During this time, visitors learn about some of the natural and historic resources of Midway Atoll, cultural resources of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, rules and regulations that protect wildlife, and personal safety information. They are provided maps and other information to make their visit more enjoyable and educational. The schedule of the briefing varies by the time the aircraft/vessel arrives on Midway, but it always occurs within 12 hours. As a helpful reference, each guest room will have a notebook containing this information. These notebooks will be updated on a regular basis. Information on natural, military, and other hazards will be included in both the orientation and the reference notebooks. Staffing the visitor center at least 4 hours per day will allow visitors the opportunity to seek answers to any questions.

For passenger vessels, briefings are either given on board the ship prior to arrival or, if no FWS-approved guides are on board, via written materials developed by the vessel company in coordination with FWS and Monument Co-Trustees. For larger groups arriving by aircraft, the orientation is conducted either at the airport prior to departure or during the flight. Since all large-group visitors are guided in small groups from one site to another along existing roads, these methods of orientation suffice.

We try to minimize the number of signs on Midway both to reduce impacts on wildlife and to allow visitors to have a more natural experience. Street signs have been lowered to minimize collisions by birds in flight. During 2009, refuge staff will analyze the need for additional signage and complete a sign plan in consultation with Co-Trustee staff.

Because of the age of Midway’s infrastructure, the atoll’s harsh climate, and the difficulty of getting materials and supplies to the atoll, maintenance of visitor facilities is a major and expensive endeavor. Efforts will be made to improve these facilities during 2008-2011. However, to ensure a minimal level of funding is available, visitor program fees will be structured to cover maintenance costs for lodging and dining facilities, on-island means of transportation (e.g., golf carts and bicycles), and at least some of the interpretive facilities. FWS will also work with its other partners on Midway to seek funding for island infrastructure maintenance and repair.

FWS’ contractor will seek feedback regarding visitor satisfaction. A previous questionnaire distributed by a private partner at Midway provided valuable insight into how we could improve our visitor program. FWS, contractor, and Co-Trustee staff will work together to make appropriate changes to enhance the visitor experience based on this feedback.

After 1 year of operation, FWS will evaluate the visitor program and work with the Co-Trustees to form recommendations for its improvement. As feasible, these recommendations will be implemented. Such assessments will continue on at least a biennial basis.

#### **4.3 Provide Quality Hunting Opportunities**

“Hunting is a wildlife-dependent recreational use and, when compatible, an appropriate use of resources in the Refuge System. Hunting programs will meet the quality criteria defined in [policy] and, to the extent practicable, be carried out consistent with State laws, regulations, and management plans.”

*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1*

Midway Atoll has no available hunting opportunities because all of its animal species are protected by law as either nongame species or threatened or endangered species, or they occur in numbers too low for harvest (e.g., migratory waterfowl).

#### **4.4 Provide Quality Fishing Opportunities**

“Fishing is a wildlife-dependent recreational use and, when compatible, an appropriate use of resources in the Refuge System. Fishing programs will meet the quality criteria defined in [policy] and, to the extent practicable, be carried out consistent with State laws, regulations, and management plans.”

*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1*

Consistent with relevant law, FWS grants wildlife-dependent public uses, including fishing, special consideration on national wildlife refuges. When determined compatible, wildlife-dependent public uses receive priority consideration over all other uses of a refuge. In this instance however, Midway Atoll is managed not just as a national wildlife refuge but as part of the Monument. In accordance with Proclamation 8031 “[r]emoving, moving, taking, harvesting, possessing, injuring, disturbing, or damaging; or attempting to remove, move, take, harvest, possess, injure, disturb, or damage any living or nonliving Monument resource” is prohibited without a permit, and recreational permits cannot be issued

for activities that result in the extraction of Monument resources. Therefore, sportfishing at Midway Atoll is not allowed.

#### **4.5 Provide Quality Wildlife Observation and Photographic Opportunities**

“Visitors of all ages and abilities will have an opportunity to observe and photograph key wildlife and habitat on the refuge when it is compatible with refuge purpose(s). Viewing and photographing wildlife in natural or managed environments should foster a connection between visitors and natural resources . . .

*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1*

*Goal 5. Enhance public understanding, appreciation, and support for protection of the Monument’s natural, cultural, and historic resources.*

*Goal 8. Offer visitor opportunities at Midway Atoll to discover and appreciate the wildlife and beauty of the NWHI, enhance conservation, and honor its unique human history.*

**Objective 5 Within 3 years, improve wildlife viewing and photography opportunities for all visitors to Midway Atoll.**

*Strategy 5.1* Maintain and monitor use of the West Beach trail to provide visitors an opportunity to view wildlife on West Beach without disturbance.

*Strategy 5.2* Construct a migratory bird/Laysan duck observation blind by March 2009.

*Strategy 5.3* Working with Monument Co-Trustees, re-establish an active dive program for visitors on Midway by May 2011.

*Strategy 5.4* In Fiscal Year 2010, seek funding for two new boats to support the visitor program, one capable of carrying at least 25 visitors to Eastern Island, the other to support the dive program.

*Strategy 5.5* By 2011, establish remote viewing cameras to transmit live video of terrestrial and marine species and their habitats to the visitor center and other locations beyond Midway Atoll.

*Discussion:* At few other places in the world can visitors be so totally surrounded by wildlife. Midway’s seabirds have little fear of humans, and visitors are offered opportunities to observe and photograph them from the time they arrive until they leave. To enhance their experience and ensure their expectations are met, a wildlife calendar has been developed showing what species are present at Midway during each month of the year. Existing bird and fish checklists have been reviewed and updated, then printed for distribution. A wildlife map of Midway Atoll shows visitors where they might have the best opportunity to see specific wildlife species. These documents will also be available on the Midway Atoll website and Monument’s web sites.

In 1997, West Beach – wrapping all the way from Rusty Bucket around Frigate Point – was closed to protect Hawaiian monk seals that use the beach for resting and pupping. To continue to allow visitors to reach historic resources in that area and to expand their opportunities to see the wildlife resources of Midway, FWS constructed a trail through the ironwood forest adjacent to West Beach, in consultation

with NOAA-Fisheries. At several locations along the trail, spur trails leading to overlooks were marked and native vegetation planted to create natural wildlife viewing blinds. That trail was renovated in 2008 to ensure visitor safety and to ensure the viewing blinds are effective in screening visitors from resting monk seals. Maintenance of the trail will be ongoing, and visitor use will be monitored to ensure wildlife resting on the beach are not disturbed.

Unlike the albatrosses and some other seabird species, Laysan ducks are frequently secretive and wary of humans. To increase opportunities for visitors to see this highly endangered species, an accessible observation/photography blind will be constructed at the water catchment basin in 2009. If needed, a spotting scope may be added to the blind to enhance viewing opportunities.

A limited water-based wildlife observation program began in 2008, using existing refuge boats. FWS and its partners will seek additional resources to expand the program. Because of the inherent safety concerns of any water-based activities, particularly in such a remote location, strict standards and rules will be established and enforced before any visitors are allowed to engage in these activities.

Snorkeling and guided kayaking opportunities are offered during daylight hours only (one-half hour after sunrise to one hour before sunset) to learn about and enjoy Midway's marine resources. Small groups of up to eight snorkelers per guide are taken by FWS-approved guides to specified locations within the lagoon to enjoy snorkeling within the lagoon and adjacent to the reef (except within the 500-foot buffer zone identified in Figure 3.1.2). Snorkeling sites are rotated to reduce marine impacts and avoid preferred monk seal and sea turtle haulout sites. Visitors are also allowed to snorkel near the cargo pier as long as no monk seals are in the vicinity. Use of the "buddy system" is required.

Guided kayaking tours of the lagoon will also be offered in groups of no more than six kayakers. All participants will be carefully instructed in kayak safety and wildlife/marine resource viewing etiquette before launching the boats. Kayakers will launch from Sand Island and may tour only from the cargo pier across the northern beach, around Rusty Bucket to Frigate Point. All kayak tours must remain at least 150 feet from shore to avoid disturbing resting monk seals on the beach. Kayaker tours will remain at least 500 feet from shore at West Beach if a monk seal mother and pup are present. FWS or FWS-approved kayak guides will be trained in kayak operation and in radio contact with employees on Sand Island. Individuals may not take kayakers out on their own. Kayaking tours will not be allowed to head toward Eastern Island or Spit Island, or to approach the reef. No snorkeling will be conducted from kayakers.

Visitors may also want to explore the coral reefs in waters inside and outside the lagoon through SCUBA diving. Monument staff will work toward re-establishing a dive program by May 2011, through the use of a concessionaire. As a preliminary step toward a dive program, the refuge manager has determined guided dive tours focused on wildlife observation and photography would be a compatible wildlife-dependent use. Divers would be accompanied by a certified master diver, with a maximum of six divers per one dive master. The dives would be specialized for divers interested in marine life and underwater photography, and all NOAA-Fisheries guidelines for viewing marine mammals and sea turtles would be met. No night diving would be allowed due to increased shark activity. Typically, this would be a seasonal activity, generally from May through September when the seas are calmer. Specific Monument protocols to ensure invasive species and disease are not transmitted through snorkel and dive gear will be implemented.

Although live-aboard dive cruises are offered on the Island of Hawai'i and many other areas of the Pacific, Midway's remote location would mean vessels would need to be in transit for many days before reaching the atoll to dive, and that they would need to transit the waters of the Monument. It is highly unlikely such a vessel could meet the environmental standards required of vessels within the Monument.

Any request for such use at Midway Atoll would require the approval of the Co-Trustees through the permitting process under a Special Ocean Uses permit. Large group day visitors are only onsite for sufficient time to allow terrestrial tours and occasionally the opportunity to swim off the North Beach. No other alternatives (e.g., snorkeling or diving) will be allowed. All requirements outlined in the compatibility determinations for wildlife observation and nonwildlife-dependent recreational activities would apply.

As technology improves and funding becomes available, we will work with our Co-Trustees to provide opportunities to broadcast live images of sensitive species such as the short-tailed albatross, Hawaiian monk seal, and Laysan duck and coral reef habitats to the visitor center on Sand Island and perhaps to the main Hawaiian Islands (such as at the Mokuāpāpapa Discovery Center in Hilo) and beyond through the National Marine Sanctuary Program’s web portal (<http://www.oceanslive.org/portal/>).

**Objective 6 Work with and encourage qualified groups or individuals to develop specialized wildlife-dependent programs such as wildlife monitoring, photography, and art in 2009 and beyond.**

*Strategy 6.1* Continue to seek new vendors who would be interested in bringing groups to Midway.

*Discussion:* In the *Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Program Market Analysis and Feasibility Study*, Pandion Systems, Inc., recommended several target audiences within the broad category of sustainable ecotourism, including specialized programs such as service learning activities, photography tours, writing and artist workshops, and educational tours. The FWS and Monument Co-Trustees agree and will continue to explore opportunities to reach such vendors. Since these programs generally bring a leader/guide/instructor with them, we need only ensure their understanding and compliance with rules and regulations and provide local expertise as needed. Proposed activities that would generate revenue or profits would require Monument Special Ocean Use permits.

**4.6 Develop and Implement Quality Environmental Education Programs**

<p>“Through curriculum-based environmental education packages based on national and State education standards, we will advance public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and knowledge of key fish, wildlife, plant, and resource issues. Each refuge will assess its potential to work with schools to provide an appropriate level of environmental education. We may support environmental education through the use of facilities, equipment, educational materials, teacher workshops, and study sites that are safe, accessible, and conducive to learning.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1</i></p>
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*Goal 5. Enhance public understanding, appreciation, and support for protection of the Monument’s natural, cultural, and historic resources.*

**Objective 7 Beginning in 2008, develop and provide annual wildlife-dependent educator and conservation leader workshops at Midway Atoll targeting a mix of formal and informal educators and community and conservation leaders and building upon Navigating Change curricula and vision.**

*Strategy 7.1* Working with the Navigating Change Educational Partnership, conduct annual, week-long educator, conservation, and community leader workshops on Midway, based on the program developed by the educator focus group in 2008.

*Strategy 7.2* By 2012, hold one educator workshop on expanding Navigating Change curricula to meet the needs of intermediate and high school classrooms.

*Discussion:* One goal of these educator and conservation leader workshops is to inspire a new group of educators to use environmental education as a method of connecting students and lifelong learners to Hawai‘i’s wildlife and culture. Another goal is to have participants in these workshops actually propose and implement an environmental stewardship program in their community, utilizing their experience at Midway as inspiration. Over the past 5 years, the partners have joined together to create Navigating Change, a project conceived by the Polynesian Voyaging Society and focused on raising awareness and ultimately motivating people to change their attitudes and behaviors to better care for our islands and ocean resources. A standards-based educational curriculum for fourth and fifth graders was released by the partnership in 2005, and more than 15 workshops have been conducted on the main Hawaiian Islands to introduce the curriculum to local teachers. The major themes included within the curriculum could provide the stepping stones for future development of educational activities such as telepresence and distance learning projects.

The target date for the first workshop on Midway would be summer 2009. Agency planning began in 2007, and the members of an educator focus group held a planning workshop in January 2008. Co-Trustee education staff will be coordinating and conducting these workshops with input from previous classes of workshop attendees, collectively referred to as Alaka‘i. By 2012, a workshop will focus on designing upper grade level curriculum components as an extension of Navigating Change. Each workshop could take approximately 15 participants.

***Objective 8*** Beginning in 2009, facilitate at least two opportunities per year for educational groups or private/nonprofit environmental or historical organizations to conduct wildlife dependent or history courses or administer informal educational camps.

*Strategy 8.1* During 2009, seek partners who may be interested in offering educational programs on Midway Atoll and set schedules for trial courses or camps in 2010.

*Strategy 8.2* By March 2010, Monument staff will develop, design, and offer a mandatory 1-day orientation that all guides and instructors must attend before hosting a class on Midway for the first time.

*Strategy 8.3* Assist with classes/camps on Midway, providing guidance to avoid impacts on wildlife resources and monitoring group activities.

*Strategy 8.4* By 2010, collaborate with universities to offer semester internship opportunities for students interested in biological studies.

*Strategy 8.5* By 2012, develop dormitory-style or other lower-cost housing, classrooms, and laboratories in support of longer-term classes on Midway.

*Strategy 8.6* Investigate opportunities to bring select middle and high school students to Midway for courses in atoll ecosystems by 2015.

*Discussion:* Organizations have already shown their interest in using Midway for educational experiences, since it provides unparalleled wildlife dependent educational opportunities. Organizations will be held responsible for providing instructors and leading their participants. The Co-Trustees will provide guidance during the mandatory advance orientation. When possible, Monument staff can provide learning opportunities that engage participants in biological and historical projects such as habitat restoration or historic preservation. FWS staff will also monitor group activities to ensure Midway’s wildlife and historic resources are protected.

The Co-Trustees support expanding environmental education opportunities to the extent feasible on Midway Atoll. Developing lower-cost housing and increasing classroom and laboratory space will facilitate these programs. An opportunity to study Midway’s unique natural resources could be the catalyst to inspire lifelong devotion to the field of science.

**Objective 9 Develop and implement new tools to bring the place to the people rather than the people to the place (with an emphasis on students) by 2010.**

*Strategy 9.1* Install appropriate technologies to make distance learning possible from Midway Atoll by 2009.

*Strategy 9.2* Initiate a distance learning program from Midway Atoll to bring the Monument to classrooms across the Nation by 2010.

*Discussion:* FWS has long been interested in offering a distance learning program from Midway, but doing so from such a remote location is challenging. As technologies improve, the Co-Trustees will evaluate the possibility of establishing such a program that could bring the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands into Hawai‘i classrooms in particular, but also to other educational venues. In order to provide support for staff, researchers, and distance learning, NOAA is exploring opportunities to install high-speed satellite uplinks on Midway Atoll.

**4.7 Provide Quality Interpretation of Key Resources**

<p>“We will communicate fish, wildlife, habitat, and other resource issues to visitors of all ages and abilities through effective interpretation. We will tailor core messages and delivery methods to provide interpretation to refuge visitors and present them in appropriate locations.” <i>Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1</i></p>
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The rich natural and human history of Midway Atoll provides a unique opportunity to promote visitor understanding of and appreciation for America’s natural and historic resources. Interpretation provides opportunities for visitors to make their own connections to the resource so that a sense of stewardship and respect for these resources develops. To ensure our interpretive products remain focused, we develop interpretive themes that guide development of all interpretive products on the refuge.

The primary interpretive themes for Midway Atoll are adapted from those of the Monument:

- Encircled by the earth’s largest ocean, the small islands and coral reefs of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands provide a scarce and safe haven for diverse native wildlife species to raise their young; to rest, grow, and play; and to survive into the future.
- These remote atolls host a complex reef ecosystem dominated by apex predators and rich in species found nowhere else in the world.

- Just as human actions can destroy wildlife and their habitat, people can restore island and reef ecosystems to benefit both wildlife and mankind through research, sound science, and special care.
- Stories, ancient chants, and archaeological remnants connect ancient Polynesians to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands not only geographically but also spiritually.
- Throughout history, Midway has served as a vital outpost for humans as they explored their world, expanded their horizons, protected their boundaries, and sought peace in the world.
- Brave young men – far from home and loved ones – risked their lives at Midway to defend America, and in doing so, turned the tide of war in the Pacific to ensure our freedom.

These themes are designed to encompass the tremendous wildlife and historical treasury found at Midway. Through a variety of interpretive methods, these themes will be conveyed to our visitors.

*Goal 5. Enhance public understanding, appreciation, and support for protection of the Monument’s natural, cultural, and historic resources.*

*Goal 7. Identify, interpret, and protect Monument historic and cultural resources.*

*Goal 8. Offer visitor opportunities at Midway Atoll to discover and appreciate the wildlife and beauty of the NWHI, enhance conservation, and honor its unique human history.*

**Objective 10 By 2012, develop a Midway Atoll interpretive plan that will be incorporated into a Monumentwide interpretive plan addressing key interpretive sites and activities.**

*Strategy 10.1* Develop detailed and site-specific descriptions of interpretive facilities, exhibits, signs, programs, trails, etc., that will meet the goals of the Monument, the interests and needs of Midway’s visitors, and the unique and meaningful features of the Monument’s natural and cultural resources.

*Discussion:* A Midway-specific interpretive plan will guide the development of additional interpretive facilities, exhibits, etc. It will be based on the Monument’s interpretive themes and include information on project priorities, costs, staffing needs, and schedules.

**Objective 11 Continuously improve onsite interpretation and interpretive facilities to better educate visitors about the natural resources of Midway Atoll and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.**

*Strategy 11.1* Offer wildlife-oriented guided tours to all visitors on at least a weekly basis.

*Strategy 11.2* Transition the wildlife-related visitor center into a Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument visitor center by September 2009, to provide an educational window to the Monument. Annually review the exhibits and update them as needed and as described in the Midway Atoll interpretive plan.

*Strategy 11.3* Provide additional opportunities for visitors to learn about ongoing management and research projects through field talks and evening programs.

*Strategy 11.4* Offer evening programs in the Midway theater, including slide talks, videos, and other presentations on the Monument’s natural and human history.

*Strategy 11.5* Support and monitor an expanded Friends of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge gift store, ensuring merchandise offers accurate and educational messages.

*Discussion:* The refuge interpreters will offer guided walks and bicycle/golf cart tours focused on natural history themes on at least a weekly basis. To ensure a quality experience, tour groups will be no larger than 25 people (except during large group visits). Tour routes will vary depending on the physical ability of the participants, the weather, and wildlife use patterns. All visitors should have the opportunity to tour Sand Island. Dependent upon the weather and availability of transportation, visitors may also have the opportunity to have a guided tour of Eastern Island, which will combine both natural and historic resource features. Tours on Eastern Island generally walk from the boat pier to and along the historic World War II runways and Battle of Midway memorials. All beaches on Eastern Island are closed to visitors to protect Hawaiian monk seals and sea turtles, and tour routes will vary to accommodate wildlife needs.

Self-discovery and exploration is a key component of the Midway experience. To enhance their experience, interpretive panels regarding Midway's natural resources will be placed at a limited number of remote locations along existing trails on Sand Island, as identified in the Midway Atoll interpretive plan. These panels may include reminders of wildlife viewing etiquette, as appropriate. If a significant number of non-English-speaking visitors come to Midway, translated versions of these panels will be made available as handouts.

The natural resource interpretive exhibits in the Midway visitor center will be reviewed for currency and updated as necessary, working in cooperation with the Co-Trustees. As the "window to the Monument," the focus of the exhibits will be broadened to include the natural resources of the entire Monument.

Researchers and biologists will be encouraged to offer field talks to describe their work and/or provide insights into the world of individual wildlife species. NOAA-Fisheries has expressed an interest in providing guided tours to view monk seals in an unobtrusive manner, and frequently researchers provide presentations or demonstrations to broaden knowledge of their activities. By better understanding the needs of each species for its survival, visitors will gain knowledge of how they can help protect these animals.

Over the years, numerous films and documentaries about the Battle of Midway and other aspects of the atoll's history and its wildlife have been produced. Sharing these with visitors in the historic Midway theater enhances their learning experience and enjoyment.

Through the Friends of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, a gift store on Midway offers visitors the opportunity to purchase Midway Atoll-related items such as books, posters, postcards, coffee mugs, tee shirts, and note cards. Refuge staff will monitor sales items to ensure they accurately interpret refuge and Monument natural and historic resources. These items will also be available on the Friends website, broadening the distribution of these interpretive materials.

***Objective 12*** By 2010, improve onsite interpretation and interpretive facilities to better educate visitors about the Battle of Midway National Memorial, Midway's human history, and Native Hawaiian culture.

*Strategy 12.1* Offer a history-oriented guided tour to all visitors on at least a weekly basis.

*Strategy 12.2* Working with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group, add a Native Hawaiian cultural component to Midway's orientation session, visitor center exhibits, and outreach materials.

*Strategy 12.3* Partner with NOAA to develop interpretive materials and displays for the temporary museum about the submerged historic sites (shipwrecks and aircraft) located within the Monument to enhance existing historic interpretation.

*Strategy 12.4* By December 2010, seek funding to restore a historic building to house a permanent museum/library to recognize and honor Midway’s – and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands’ – distinguished history.

*Strategy 12.5* By December 2012, complete restoration of a historic building to house the museum and develop and install the interpretive exhibits as identified in the Midway Atoll interpretive plan.

*Strategy 12.6* Annually review, update, and/or replace exhibits within the museum to ensure they appropriately represent the Monument.

*Discussion:* Much like the natural history tours, historic resource guided tours will be offered by refuge staff on at least a weekly basis. To ensure a quality experience, tour groups will be no larger than 25 people (except during large group visits). Depending upon the physical ability of the participants, the weather, the length of the tour route, and the potential impacts on wildlife, these tours may be on foot, by bicycle, or by golf cart. On Sand Island, the history tour will be separate from the wildlife-oriented tour; on Eastern Island, both topics will be covered in one visit.

Sand Island’s historic structures are found in all corners of the island. A self-guided historic resource tour map with descriptive information was developed in 1996 and was updated in 2008 for current visitor use. Interpretive panels regarding several of Midway’s historic resources were produced in 2002. Because the regularly scheduled visitor program was no longer active, the panels were temporarily placed on portable stands for use only during large group visits. Now that visitors are returning on a more regular basis to Midway, these panels have been mounted as originally planned at their designated sites to bring history to life along the self-guided tour.

As the “window to the Monument,” interpretation at Midway will be broadened to include information about the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands’ importance in Native Hawaiian culture. All interpretive materials and presentations will be reviewed to ensure the islands’ cultural resources are appropriately represented.

History-related exhibits are currently housed on the first floor in the airport hangar. Because that location is rarely visited by visitors and because the building is deteriorating, the exhibits are being moved to a new temporary location in the visitor center in 2009. The new site will be more readily accessible to visitors.

In the longer term, one of the historic buildings – probably within the “Midway Mall” – will be restored to house a permanent museum/library. Detailed plans for this facility will be included in the Midway Atoll interpretive plan. In accordance with the *Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge Historic Preservation Plan*, FWS does not plan to acquire materials currently preserved in museums, archival institutions, and private collections to bring them to Midway’s harsh environmental conditions. It is more appropriate to acquire copies of such materials for Midway, allowing the originals to remain secured at existing facilities or in a repository in Hawai‘i. Interpretive exhibits will be developed to reflect all of Midway’s “eras,” from prerecorded history to discovery, to shipwrecks and the Commercial Pacific Cable Company days, the Pan American Flying Clipper period, the Battle of Midway, and on through the Cold War and Vietnam conflicts. Broader based exhibits about cultural and historic sites throughout the

Northwestern Hawaiian Islands will also be developed in partnership with NOAA’s cultural resources program and the State of Hawai‘i.

**Objective 13 By 2010, develop at least two offsite exhibits and programs to educate the general public about the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and Midway Atoll in particular.**

*Strategy 13.1* In 2009, develop and install a visitor access exhibit in NOAA’s Mokuapāpapa Discovery Center in Hilo, Hawai‘i, as part of the updating of the facility.

*Strategy 13.2* Working with the National Park Service and other key entities, develop offsite exhibits within the World War II in the Pacific Interpretive Concept that feature the historic Battle of Midway and Battle of Midway National Memorial.

*Strategy 13.3* Work with the other venues to incorporate information about Midway Atoll and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in their exhibits.

*Discussion:* Since the number of visitors to Midway Atoll will always be relatively small, FWS will work with partner entities to provide information about the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and Midway Atoll to a broader audience. The Mokuapāpapa Discovery Center in Hilo, Hawai‘i, informs an average of 60,000 visitors per year about the new Monument. As funding is available, FWS will work with NOAA to incorporate an exhibit about Midway Atoll and visitor opportunities. Additional opportunities, such as within the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands exhibit at the Waikiki Aquarium, will be sought in 2008 and beyond.

While some exhibits will focus on natural history, FWS will also ensure appropriate attention is placed on the Battle of Midway in offsite interpretive efforts. In establishing the Battle of Midway National Memorial, FWS was charged with helping others keep knowledge of this important battle alive for future generations. In the near term, our first efforts will be at Pearl Harbor with its many World War II in the Pacific themed attractions. We will also seek partners to help place an exhibit in Washington, D.C.

**Objective 14 Work with and encourage qualified groups or individuals to develop specialized historical programs that honor the Battle of Midway.**

*Strategy 14.1* Continue to seek new vendors who would be interested in bringing history-related groups to Midway.

*Discussion:* FWS will explore opportunities to bring historical tours, either through commercial tour groups or veterans organizations, to Midway Atoll in recognition of its status as the Battle of Midway National Memorial. All such tours will be reviewed and approved through the Monument permitting process.

**4.8 Manage for Other Recreational Use Opportunities**

“We may allow other recreational uses that support or enhance one of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses or minimally conflict with any of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses when we determine they are both appropriate and compatible. We will allow uses that are either legally mandated or occur due to special circumstances.”

*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1*

**Objective 15 Allow residents and visitors to engage in other recreational uses on Midway in regulated areas that have been determined to be compatible.**

*Strategy 15.1* Allow residents and visitors to ride bicycles and jog for exercise on existing roads.

*Strategy 15.2* Allow residents and visitors to play tennis and volleyball at designated facilities.

*Strategy 15.3* Allow beach uses such as swimming and sunbathing for visitors and residents.

*Strategy 15.4* Allow amateur radio use from Midway Atoll in accordance with stipulations that make the use compatible.

*Discussion:* The refuge manager has determined that several forms of nonwildlife-dependent recreation are compatible with the Refuge System mission and the refuge purposes, and therefore Monument permits may include special conditions to allow them. These activities will take place only on Sand Island, and most are within developed areas. Bicycling and jogging will be restricted to hard surface roads, including along the edges of the runway, or along the cart path of the West Beach trail. Volleyball will only be allowed in the designated court area adjacent to the Captain Brooks facility. The tennis court is located outside the airport hangar building.

Swimming and sunbathing may only occur on the open public beach along the northern shore of Sand Island during daylight hours (from one-half hour after sunrise to one-half hour before sunset) for visitor safety. Use of the “buddy system” will be required. During the mandatory orientation session, visitors will be advised of appropriate behavior if a monk seal or sea turtle approaches them in the water.

Because of potential bird strikes on amateur radio antennae, limitations will be placed on this use. FWS will work with amateur radio enthusiasts to implement a compatible program, as long as it does not displace wildlife-dependent visitors wanting to visit Midway Atoll. Placement of the outdoor antennae must be approved by the refuge manager.

#### **4.9 Communicate Key Issues with Off-Site Audiences**

“Effective outreach depends on open and continuing communication and collaboration between the refuge and its many publics. Effective outreach involves determining and understanding the issues, identifying audiences, listening to stakeholders, crafting messages, selecting the most effective delivery techniques, and evaluating effectiveness. If conducted successfully, the results we achieve will further refuge purpose(s) and the Refuge System mission.”

*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1*

*Goal 5. Enhance public understanding, appreciation, and support for protection of the Monument’s natural, cultural, and historic resources.*

*Goal 7. Identify, interpret, and protect Monument historic and cultural resources.*

**Objective 16 On a continuing basis, maintain outreach efforts to Midway’s diverse audiences to update them on the visitor program and wildlife-oriented news stories.**

*Strategy 16.1* On a continuing basis, update the Monument and refuge websites with current information about the visitor program and wildlife viewing opportunities.

*Strategy 16.2* On an as-needed basis, issue news releases and write articles for publication in newsletters, magazines, or other periodicals to keep key publics informed about the visitor program on Midway Atoll and wildlife issues throughout the Monument.

*Strategy 16.3* Continue to support reporters and documentary filmmakers in developing appropriate articles and films/television productions about the wildlife and history of Midway Atoll.

*Discussion:* Midway Atoll, the Battle of Midway National Memorial, and the Monument have been highly visible in the public eye for some time. The atoll has a broad following by government officials, Members of Congress, veterans' organizations, environmental organizations, media, former residents, past and potential visitors, World War II historians, and others who can be defined as "key publics." Rather than being "local community" members, Midway's supporters are spread across the Nation and around the world.

As individual issues arise regarding Midway, refuge staff on Midway and in Honolulu will work together with their counterparts in the Monument to reach out to our publics with timely and accurate information. The Midway Atoll website (<http://www.fws.gov/midway>) and Monument website will be continuously updated with news of Midway's wildlife, ongoing visitor activities, Battle of Midway-related events, and other Monument-related topics. News releases will be issued to the media as appropriate, and information or articles for periodicals will be provided as requested.

Documentary filmmakers and videographers will be accommodated to the extent possible under Monument permits so that we can reach the broadest audiences. Staffing levels may limit the number of filmmakers that can be accommodated.

***Objective 17* By March 2009, evaluate the effectiveness of the visitor program marketing effort.**

*Strategy 17.1* Assess the need to contract with a marketing firm to promote the visitor program.

*Discussion:* Although FWS will promote the visitor program at Midway to the best of its ability, the specialized skills of a marketing company may be needed to develop sufficient demand to make the program financially self-sustaining. If the evaluation indicates additional work is needed, FWS would work closely with the marketing firm to ensure appropriate and accurate information is distributed to target audiences.

***Objective 18* Working with partners, offer special events and programs on Midway and at other offsite locations that honor its history and natural resources.**

*Strategy 18.1* Annually commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Midway from June 4-6.

*Strategy 18.2* Celebrate other Monument-focused special events such as Maritime Heritage Week, International Migratory Bird Day, and the International Year of the Reef.

*Strategy 18.3* Work with outside entities to sponsor history-related programs and events on Midway.

*Strategy 18.4* Seek other venues and opportunities to participate in special events that connect to Midway’s history.

*Discussion:* Occasionally, special events will be offered at Midway, particularly in relation to its status as the Battle of Midway National Memorial. As staffing allows, we will also participate in other offsite events to bring the history of Midway to larger numbers of people.

FWS continues to believe the historic aspects of Midway Atoll are an important draw for visitors. In addition to organizations such as the International Midway Memorial Foundation, which is dedicated to honoring and preserving the memory and values of the Battle of Midway, many individuals who were stationed on Midway during the Cold War era have expressed an interest in returning to the atoll with their families.

Other internationally recognized designations such as the International Year of the Reef should also be celebrated on Midway Atoll.

#### **4.10 Build Volunteer Programs and Partnerships with Midway Atoll Support Groups**

“Volunteer and Friends organizations fortify refuge staffs with their gifts of time, skills, and energy. They are integral to the future of the Refuge System. Where appropriate, refuge staff will initiate and nurture relationships with volunteers and Friends organizations and will continually support, monitor, and evaluate these groups with the goal of fortifying important refuge activities. The National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 strengthens the Refuge System’s role in developing effective partnerships with various community groups. Whether through volunteers, Friends organizations, or other important partnerships in the community, refuge personnel will seek to make the refuge an active community member, giving rise to a stronger Refuge System.”

*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, 605 FW 1*

*Goal 1. Protect, preserve, maintain, and where appropriate restore the physical environment and the natural biological communities and their associated biodiversity, habitats, populations, native species, and ecological integrity.*

*Goal 4. Provide for cooperative conservation, including community involvement, that achieves effective Monument operations and ecosystem-based management.*

*Goal 5. Enhance public understanding, appreciation, and support for protection of the Monument’s natural, cultural, and historic resources.*

*Goal 7. Identify, interpret, and protect Monument historic and cultural resources.*

*Goal 8. Offer visitor opportunities at Midway Atoll to discover and appreciate the wildlife and beauty of the NWHI, enhance conservation, and honor its unique human history.*

**Objective 19 Incorporate at least 75 percent of visitors staying 3 days or longer into the volunteer program for habitat restoration.**

*Strategy 19.1* Plan weekly invasive plant pulling parties to involve visitors in invasive weed control.

*Strategy 19.2* Provide trash bags for visitors to take with them as they walk along the open beach so they can collect marine debris as they find it.

*Strategy 19.3* Schedule monthly beach cleanups to pick up marine debris on closed beaches where Monument staff have determined no monk seals or sea turtles are resting.

*Discussion:* Hand pulling of weeds is labor intensive, but it is also an effective tool in the continuing battle against invasive plant species. On most areas of Midway Atoll, the sandy substrate makes weed pulling relatively easy. Many visitors want to “give something back” to the wildlife during their time on the atoll, and this activity will help restore acres of habitat for nesting seabirds.

Beach cleanups are also a valuable tool, not only to protect wildlife species but also to educate visitors about the marine debris problem. By involving them in cleanup efforts, they are more likely to seek solutions and educate others about the problem. Refuge or other designated biologists would first ensure no resting monk seals or sea turtles are present in the stretch of beach to be cleaned. Areas to be cleaned would be rotated around the islands from one month to the next so that all beaches would be cleaned twice a year, if possible.

**Objective 20 Provide 25 percent of visitors staying 3 days or longer opportunities to assist with wildlife population monitoring as volunteers.**

*Strategy 20.1* As refuge staff or long-term biological volunteers are available, offer interested visitors the opportunity to assist with seabird monitoring and banding activities.

*Strategy 20.2* As refuge staff, U.S. Geological Survey-Biological Resources Discipline staff, or long-term biological volunteers are available, allow interested visitors the opportunity to assist with Laysan duck monitoring activities.

*Discussion:* Much like the habitat restoration work above, visitors gain a better appreciation for wildlife and their needs with direct involvement in a monitoring program. All such work would be under the direct supervision of a trained biologist to prevent impacts on the animals. This program will be limited in size and nature, and will be continually monitored by the refuge biologist and refuge manager to ensure it is useful to both the wildlife populations and the visitor.

**Objective 21 Seek long-term well qualified volunteers to assist Monument staff with the operation of the visitor services program.**

*Discussion:* As a complement to Midway Atoll’s ongoing biological volunteer program, we will offer opportunities for qualified volunteers to assist with interpretive programs on Midway. Monument staff will explore the possibility of offering an intern program for college students or other similarly trained volunteers.

**Objective 22 Seek grant funds to bring at least two groups of volunteers to Midway each year to work on historic restoration projects under the guidance of FWS’ cultural resources staff and/or historic preservation specialists.**

*Strategy 22.1* Beginning in 2008, apply for a *Save America's Treasures* (SAT) grant for historic rehabilitation work on Midway Atoll.

*Discussion:* The SAT grant requires a 50/50 match, which FWS can accrue through volunteer service, direct contributions, or material donations. FWS received a SAT grant in 1999 that included termite control work, theater building window restoration, a condition assessment report for the interior of the theater and the Commercial Pacific Cable Company Station, reroofing of one cable building, restoration of an ARMCO hut, and collection of oral histories and memorabilia. A similar program could be reinitiated in the future.

***Objective 23* Provide at least 15 percent of visitors staying 3 days or longer opportunities to assist with historic preservation tasks and activities.**

*Strategy 23.1* Much like the habitat restoration projects, volunteers will be offered opportunities to help accomplish historic preservation tasks that require few technical skills.

*Discussion:* FWS' Cultural Resources Team or Historic Preservation Specialist will update the list yearly or as needed to meet the refuge staff recommendations. Volunteers could greatly facilitate the maintenance of historic resources and give the public a greater appreciation and involvement with historic preservation.

**4.11 *Refuge Law Enforcement***

A refuge law enforcement officer is present on Midway Atoll, and a law enforcement zone officer in Honolulu and other refuge officers in Hawai'i provide support on an as-needed basis. For large events, the zone officer assembles a group of officers from refuges throughout the Pacific Region to provide law enforcement. Midway's refuge officer will also assist with law enforcement issues for the Monument.

**4.12 *Concession Operations***

Because this is a small-scale program that is just reopening, the Midway Atoll visitor program will be operated by existing Monument staff in its early years. The program evaluation required in 2009 and biennially thereafter will allow further assessment of whether the program should be operated by a concessionaire. Developing a solicitation for a concessionaire, seeking proposals, and evaluating them can take up to a year to complete.

The one exception to this could be a snorkeling/SCUBA diving concession, which was briefly discussed above in the wildlife observation standard. If interest is expressed in such a program, FWS and its Co-Trustees will evaluate the feasibility of a diving concession at Midway in 2011 or beyond.

**4.13 *Fee Programs***

Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge has charged access fees for its visitor program since 1997, when it received approval under the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. That program has now been renamed the Recreation Fee Program, established through the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-447). Almost all of the original fee program sites transitioned into the new program. The entrance fee for Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge is \$5.00 per person per day.

With limited FWS funding available to support a visitor program, the refuge has been charged by FWS with developing a visitor program that is financially self-sustaining. To help us meet this goal, Congress has also given the refuge receipts authority, which allows the refuge to keep reasonable fees collected for

services provided at Midway Atoll. These fees will be used to offset costs of implementing the visitor services program.

The following fee schedule reflects actual costs for visiting Midway. The entrance fee is collected under the authority of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Lodging and meal fees cover additional hotel and food services staffing, hotel supplies, and food costs. The visitor fee is collected under Midway’s receipt authority and contributes toward the cost of additional refuge staffing or extended on-island volunteers needed to work with visitors, as well as enhancing visitor facilities. The on-island transportation rental fees will enable repair and replacement of these items as necessary. Boating fees cover vessel maintenance and fuel costs. Round-trip airfare is based on the actual cost of the current flight, divided by the number of passengers that can be accommodated on the aircraft. If that cost can be reduced in the future, the airfare will be reduced accordingly.

**Table 4.13.1 Visitor Program Fee Schedule (as of 2008)**

Description	Fee
Entrance fee	\$5 per day
Round trip airfare	\$2,000 per person
Lodging	\$125 per night
Meals	\$45 per day
Visitor fee	\$55 per day
Bicycle rental (optional)	\$5 per day
Golf cart rental (optional)	\$25 per day
Snorkel rental (optional)	\$25 per week
Boat fees (for Eastern Island or snorkeling trips)	\$20 per half day

In the *Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Program Market Analysis and Feasibility Study*, Pandion Systems surveyed similar tourism providers to ascertain a typical cost range. Excluding transportation costs, typical costs ranged from \$200 to \$400 per day. Thus the Midway fees above are considered reasonable for the experience offered.

FWS recognizes the extremely high airfare costs associated with our current charter aircraft. We will continue to seek a more cost-efficient means of transportation for our visitors.

#### **4.14 Permitting**

##### **General Permit Requirements**

As part of the newly established Monument, activities within the Midway Atoll Special Management Area will be managed differently than at other national wildlife refuges. Typically, and with few exceptions, lands and waters within the Refuge System, including Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, are closed to all public access and use unless FWS has specifically opened the use or use program on that refuge. The process of opening a refuge includes planning, appropriateness review and compatibility determinations, public review and comment, and NEPA compliance. Some uses, such as sport fishing or hunting, may also require the adoption of refuge-specific regulations under the Administrative Procedure Act involving public comment and publication in the Federal Register. Throughout the Refuge System, this process is used to open a refuge for general access, a particular use, or suite of uses. The refuge manager may also require a special use permit for specialized uses.

However, Proclamation 8031 alters the regulatory regime under which the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge is operated as part of the Monument. The Proclamation established new requirements and methods of management throughout the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. By overlaying the Midway Atoll and Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuges, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, and State of Hawai‘i’s Seabird Sanctuary at Kure Atoll and marine refuge with the Monument, the Proclamation created a mechanism to ensure the Co-Trustees provide consistent, unified management while meeting their respective obligations under other applicable statutes and regulations. Specifically, Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge is a location where the FWS conducts compatibility determinations in consultation with the Co-Trustees to aid the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce, in their discretion, to issue a co-signed Monument permit in one of six permit categories described in the Proclamation, provided the Secretaries find the activity:

*(i) is research designed to further understanding of Monument resources and qualities; (ii) will further the educational value of the Monument; (iii) will assist in the conservation and management of the Monument; (iv) will allow Native Hawaiian practices; (v) will allow a special ocean use; or (vi) will allow recreational activities.*

Furthermore, the Secretaries may not issue any permit unless they find:

- the activity can be conducted with adequate safeguards for the resources and ecological integrity of the Monument;
- the activity will be conducted in a manner compatible<sup>2</sup> with the management direction of this proclamation, considering the extent to which the conduct of the activity may diminish or enhance Monument resources, qualities, and ecological integrity, and indirect, secondary, or cumulative effects of the activity, and the duration of such effects;
- there is no practicable alternative to conducting the activity within the Monument;
- the end value of the activity outweighs its adverse impacts on Monument resources, qualities, and ecological integrity;
- the duration of the activity is no longer than necessary to achieve its stated purpose;
- the applicant is qualified to conduct and complete the activity and mitigate any potential impacts resulting from its conduct;
- the applicant has adequate financial resources available to conduct and complete the activity and mitigate any potential impacts resulting from its conduct;
- the methods and procedures proposed by the applicant are appropriate to achieve the proposed activity’s goals in relation to their impacts to Monument resources, qualities, and ecological integrity;
- the applicant’s vessel has been outfitted with a mobile transceiver unit approved by NOAA Office of Law Enforcement and complies with the requirements of this proclamation; and
- there are no other factors that would make the issuance of a permit for the activity inappropriate<sup>3</sup>.

The six categories of Monument permits are:

1. Conservation and Management;
2. Native Hawaiian Practices;
3. Research;
4. Education;

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<sup>2</sup> Note the use of this word is not necessarily consistent with the same terminology from the Administration Act and FWS policy and regulations promulgated thereunder.

<sup>3</sup> Note the use of this word is not necessarily consistent with the same terminology from the Administration Act and FWS policy and regulations promulgated thereunder.

5. Recreation; and
6. Special Ocean Use.

### **Permits for Visitor Services at Midway Atoll**

Permit applications for visitor services at Midway Atoll will be considered using the findings required by Proclamation 8031 as described above. As discussed in sections 4.5-4.10, 4.12, and 4.13, the plan anticipates recreational, ecotourism, volunteer, and educational activities, which would require Monument permits in the recreation, special ocean use, conservation and management, or education categories.

### **Additional Requirements for Individual Recreational Uses**

Recreational uses conducted by individuals at Midway Atoll, such as snorkeling from the cargo pier, must also comply with additional requirements. For the purposes of this chapter, the Monument recreation permit requirement applies to recreational visitors and transients within the Midway Atoll Special Management Area. The Secretaries may not issue a recreation permit unless they find:

- the activity is for the purpose of recreation when defined as “an activity conducted for personal enjoyment that does not result in the extraction of Monument resources and that does not involve a fee-for-service transaction”
- the activity is not associated with any for-hire operation; and
- the activity does not involve any extractive use.

### **Additional Requirements for Special Ocean Uses**

Enterprises offering recreational use opportunities at Midway Atoll that generate revenue or profits for one or more of the persons associated with the activity or use (e.g., ecotourism, passenger vessels, filmmakers, and potentially some education and research activities) must comply with not only the special ocean use permit requirements from the Proclamation, but also two additional requirements:

- the Secretaries find the activity furthers the conservation and management of the Monument; and
- the refuge manager has found the use compatible with the purposes for which Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge was designated.

For the purposes of this chapter, a FWS special use permit as described in the Administration Act or regulation or associated policy at the Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge would instead be issued as a Monument special ocean use permit.

### **Permits for Recreational<sup>4</sup> Uses within Midway Atoll Special Management Area**

The permitting regime for the visitor services program for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses within the Midway Atoll Special Management Area will be as follows. This plan makes a distinction between visitors (those who visit Midway Atoll specifically to participate in some form of recreational, historical, or memorial-related activity covered under this plan) and transients (those who visit Midway Atoll to conduct work or other permitted activities but wish to recreate in their off-duty hours) and island residents. Island residents include FWS staff (employees and volunteers), NOAA staff, and various resident contractors living on Midway Atoll. Island residents’ participation in recreational activities is part of the FWS morale, welfare, and recreation program. As such, it is covered under the

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<sup>4</sup> “Recreational” is used here as defined in the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended.

FWS conservation and management Monument permit and is not discussed further in this plan. However, all morale, welfare, and recreation activities must adhere to all other requirements and stipulations; it is only in the form of permitting that these activities may differ.

This visitor services plan and its associated findings of appropriateness, compatibility determinations, and environmental assessment<sup>5</sup> evaluate broad categories of recreational uses that will generally be allowed or prohibited. Visitors and transients who desire to participate in any one of the uses approved within this plan may apply for a Monument permit. However, in order to be user-friendly and minimize paperwork, these individuals will be provided a Monument permit application as part of their registration forms instead of using the unified application process in advance. This paper form will fulfill the needs of the unified Monument permit application without placing an undue burden on the individuals or the Monument staff who must review them. Monument recreation permits are free under this visitor services plan, and valid for the remainder of the existing Federal fiscal year (October 1 – September 30 of the following calendar year).

The Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge manager is responsible for summarizing all individual Monument permits issued as described above during a fiscal year for the FWS annual public use report and the Monument permit tracking system.

The minimum information to be collected includes the full name and signature of applicant, home address and telephone number, types of approved uses in which permission is sought to engage, date(s) of participation, approximate time spent in each activity, etc.

Enterprises who wish to offer fee-for-service visitor opportunities in accordance with this plan must apply for a Monument special ocean use permit using the unified Monument permit application. These Monument special ocean use permits include permission “to transit the Monument as necessary to enter the Midway Atoll Special Management Area” and will be issued in accordance with all Proclamation special ocean use findings, criteria, and requirements, such as being valid for no more than 5 years, requiring the provider to carry insurance or a bond, etc. These permits will carry a variable fee based on recovering the government’s cost in reviewing, issuing, and monitoring the permit under this visitor services plan. These permits may also include a per passenger fee, profit-sharing agreements, or use of government facilities.

Nothing in this plan is intended to limit the ability of the Co-Trustees to actively seek for-profit enterprises to enter into concession agreements or other legal relationships to provide specific for-fee services that help achieve refuge and Monument purposes or goals and this plan.

### **Emergency Provisions**

In addition to Proclamation 8031’s exemption to prohibitions for emergencies and law enforcement activities (“The prohibitions required by this proclamation shall not apply to activities necessary to respond to emergencies threatening life, property, or the environment, or to activities necessary for law enforcement purposes”), the Administration Act contains similar provisions which apply only to the national wildlife refuge portions of the Monument. These provisions are:

- Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the Secretary [of the Interior] may temporarily suspend, allow, or initiate any activity in a refuge in the [National Wildlife Refuge] System if the

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<sup>5</sup> The FONSI signed on May 23, 2007, for the Interim Visitor Services Plan addressed most of these activities. Increased visitation is addressed in the Monument Management Plan Environmental Assessment, found in Volume II of the Plan.

Secretary [of the Interior] determines it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the public or any fish or wildlife population.

- These provisions include, but are not limited to, compatibility and permitting requirements. Recreational uses previously found to be appropriate and compatible may be suspended for the protection of human health, life, or safety; property; general environment; or fish or wildlife population.

The refuge manager's execution of these provisions should be conducted in consultation with the Monument Co-Trustees in advance when practicable, or as quickly as practicable once the immediate emergency or threat has passed.

#### **4.15 Cooperating Association/Friends Groups**

Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge is fortunate to have a dedicated support group in the form of the Friends of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. This nonprofit group was formed in 1999 and currently has more than 200 members from across the Nation. The Friends group was formed to:

- support Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge in its efforts to preserve, protect, and restore the biological diversity and historical resources of Midway Atoll, while providing opportunity for wildlife-dependent recreation, education, and scientific research.
- make available interpretive and educational books and pamphlets primarily through retail book sales outlets and free distribution to add to the visitor's understanding of the refuge's management problems and programs, the natural and historic resources of the area, the Refuge System, and FWS.
- contribute funds, goods, and services for FWS interpretation, recreation, and educational programs. Interpretive, recreational, and educational facilities may also be constructed, rehabilitated, or maintained with the use of Friends donations.

The Friends of Midway Atoll operate a gift store on Midway, making such refuge or Monument-related items as books, posters, postcards, coffee mugs, tee shirts, and note cards available to visitors and residents. Donations from the Friends group are used to improve, maintain, and update Midway Atoll's interpretive, educational, recreational, or biological programs or facilities. In the past, the Friends have purchased bicycles for the refuge and financially supported the annual albatross count by volunteers. They sought grants to fund invasive species control work by volunteers that began in December 2006.

## Chapter 5 Implementing the Plan

### 5.1 Proposed Staffing

Current FWS staffing at Midway Atoll includes a refuge manager, deputy refuge manager, wildlife biologist, biological science technician, park ranger (law enforcement), supervisory visitor services manager, park ranger (interpretive), equipment operator, and administrative officer (stationed in Honolulu). The supervisory visitor services manager has the primary responsibility for Midway’s visitor program, including program development, program implementation, program evaluation, coordination with Monument partners, and supervision of the interpretive staff. This employee is responsible for implementing the visitor services plan for Midway in collaboration with Monument Co-Trustee staff. FWS staff in Honolulu will continue to provide support for the Midway visitor program. With the very limited visitor program currently operating at Midway Atoll, this staff has been able to provide visitor services outlined in this plan. When large groups are scheduled to stop at Midway, the sponsor covers the cost of bringing additional visitor services staff to the atoll from the main Hawaiian Islands.

This plan includes activities that can be implemented with funded staff, but longer term development of the visitor program will require additional staff, including additional refuge interpretive rangers. Long-term qualified volunteers may also assist with staffing. In addition, our operations contractor will need to hire additional staff to support the visitor program. These positions will be phased in over the next 5 years as the program is implemented. Staffing may also be augmented by other Monument staff from NOAA or the State of Hawai‘i should those resources become available.

### 5.2 Table of Projects

The table below summarizes the various strategies and projects outlined in this visitor services plan. Implementation of these projects is dependent upon the availability of funding.

**Table 5.2.1 Summary of Strategies/Projects**

Strategy	Project	Target Date
4.7	Complete evaluation of visitor program and make recommendations for improvements	03/31/2009
5.2	Construct a migratory bird/Laysan duck observation blind	03/31/2009
17.1	Assess need to contract with a marketing firm to promote the visitor program	03/31/2009
7.1	Conduct annual educator/conservation leader workshops based on Navigating Change	06/30/2009
11.2	Transition wildlife-related visitor center into a Monument visitor center	09/30/2009
13.1	Develop and install exhibit at Mokupāpapa Discovery Center	12/31/2009
8.3	Facilitate wildlife-dependent educational classes or educational camps	12/31/2009
5.4	Acquire new vessels to support visitor services program	10/31/2010
1.2	Seek larger capacity aircraft to service Midway Atoll on a regular basis	12/31/2010
13.2	Develop Battle of Midway National Memorial interpretive exhibit in Pearl Harbor Historic District	12/31/2010
5.3	Work with NOAA Co-Trustees to reestablish a dive program for visitors	05/31/2011
10.1	Complete Midway Atoll interpretive plan	12/31/2012
4.5	Develop and install interpretive exhibits and signs in accordance with interpretive plan	05/31/2015

Strategy	Project	Target Date
1.1 and 8.5	Establish additional housing opportunities for individuals and groups	Dependent upon the availability of funding
9.2	Initiate a distance learning program from Midway Atoll	Dependent upon availability of funding
12.5	Restore historic building to house Midway Atoll museum	Dependent upon availability of funding
5.5	Establish remote viewing cameras on sensitive species	Dependent upon availability of funding

### **5.3 Partnership Funding and Resources**

Midway Atoll has several partnering opportunities with other government entities. Henderson Field, Sand Island’s airport, is operated in partnership with the Department of Transportation’s Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Significant funding has been provided by FAA to not only operate the facility but to upgrade its facilities to meet their Part 139 standards. In addition to serving the needs of Midway Atoll, the airfield is operated as an emergency landing site for twin-engine aircraft flying across the Pacific Ocean.

As part of the Monument, the refuge also partners with NOAA’s National Marine Sanctuary Program, which shares jurisdiction for the Monument with FWS. We are also committed to working with the State of Hawai‘i on Monument programs and issues. Opportunities to share resources and projects with these entities will bring enhanced efficiencies and effectiveness to all of our work in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service also monitors Hawaiian monk seals on Midway. It also established a monk seal “captive care and release” program on Midway to enhance survivability rates for female monk seal pups as a cooperative conservation effort between NOAA, FWS, and nongovernmental organizations.

NOAA’s Office of Law Enforcement provides significant support by enforcing Monument regulations, including at Midway Atoll.

Another Department of the Interior agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, worked with refuge staff to bring the endangered Laysan duck to Midway, establishing only the second wild population of the species in the world. The National Park Service has provided funding for historic preservation on Midway through the “Save America’s Treasures” program and has also provided interpreters to assist with guided tours when large groups visit Midway.

Together, FWS and its Co-Trustees coordinate with the U.S. Coast Guard as they exercise their law enforcement, search and rescue, and medical evacuation responsibilities in the central Pacific. The Coast Guard is working with FWS to store aircraft fuel on Midway for mission-related use, and occasionally crews will stay on Midway during extended operations.

The Monument Co-Trustees also partner with universities to conduct research on Midway that will lead to better management of its resources and with documentary filmmakers and photographers who broaden public knowledge of Midway’s wildlife and historic resources.

Other valued partners include our dedicated refuge volunteers, who generally give 3 months or more of their time working on Midway, and the Friends of Midway Atoll, our refuge support group.

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