

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA



PRESS RELEASE

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Protecting Papahānaumokuākea from Marine Aliens

The nation's largest marine protected area, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM), has only 13 alien algae, fish and marine invertebrates established. The Monument's isolation and inaccessibility provides a barrier to frequent species invasions by natural means, which allows a level of protection for native plants and animals. For marine environments in the Monument this barrier is overcome more easily by man-made means of transport, such as maritime vessels.

Vessel inspections for marine alien species started three years ago, and have added yet another buffer. The PMNM marine alien species inspection program has become the most intensive program of its type in the country. Vessels, including NOAA research vessels must pass inspection before an entry permit is granted. The majority of vessels applying for permits are based in Hawai'i, but even ones coming from outside the state must make port call in Honolulu for fuel and supplies, which allows inspections to be done more easily.

The last week of August, Scott Godwin, a NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Resource Protection Specialist and one of the creators of the Monument's vessel inspection program presented details about it to the *International Marine Bio-Invasions Conference* in Portland, OR. He explains that all ocean-going vessels, with the exception of those transiting through or those operated by branches of the U.S. military, are required to undergo inspections in Honolulu before entering the Monument.

Godwin and other scientists believe marine some alien species at Papahānaumokuākea got there as biofouling on the hulls of ships and boats. The vessel inspection program, is a collaboration between NOAA and the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, which owns and operates the equipment used. Inspections include tests of ballast water and looking for evidence of biofouling on ship hulls. The latter activity is accomplished by using either trained divers, a ROV (remotely operated vehicle) equipped with a video camera or a retractable pole camera system. These methods allow a thorough bow to stern inspection. Many vessels help make the process more efficient and faster by actually cleaning their hulls prior to inspections. Godwin, says just six years ago the vessel inspection program was only a framework. Now he estimates formal inspections are conducted on 15-20 vessels each year; everything from research vessels, to the Polynesian sailing canoe the *Hōkūle'a*, to large commercial vessels and sail boats. In addition the Monument co-trustee managers, (NOAA, U.S. Department of the Interior and the State of Hawaii), have a rigorous program for keeping invasive species off of land in the Northwestern Hawaii Islands. Among those requirements are bleaching and special treatments for diving gear and the freezing of clothing before people go onto islands or atolls. Godwin says the particular geographical setting of Papahānaumokuākea facilitates restricting access and adds, "the main source of transport for marine alien species is by human means."

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations.

Three co-trustees – the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai'i – joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place, which is now being considered for inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. For more information, please visit www.papahanaumokuakea.gov

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