



PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA  
Marine National Monument

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**Agencies Remove Estimated 100,000 Pounds of Marine Debris from  
Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument**

(Honolulu, HI) Approximately 100,000 pounds of marine debris were removed from Kure Atoll State Wildlife Sanctuary and Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Thanks to support from a Marine Debris Mitigation Capitol Improvement Project appropriation from the State of Hawai'i through the Department of Land and Natural Resources, Division of Forestry and Wildlife, the mountain of marine debris—12 shipping containers holding an estimated 100,000 pounds—was shipped to Honolulu from Midway Atoll aboard the charter vessel *Kahana*. The debris was collected from the reefs and beaches of Midway and Kure Atolls over the last six years and stored on the tarmac at Midway until it could be removed and shipped to Honolulu. Now, through the Nets to Energy Program, it will be processed by Schnitzer Steel Corporation and transported to the City and County of Honolulu's H-POWER plant (a Covanta Energy Corporation facility), where it is incinerated to produce electricity.

"The success of this project is linked to effective inter-agency coordination, communication and action," said Jason Misaki, Oahu Wildlife Manager, DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife. "Marine debris in the Monument affects all partners, making joint efforts like this one extremely instrumental to our continued protection of resources."

Marine debris is a potentially lethal entanglement and ingestion hazard for wildlife—including threatened Hawaiian green sea turtles and endangered Hawaiian monk seals. Plastic debris and fishing line are often ingested by wildlife such as seabirds and can lead to their starvation and death. At Midway and Kure Atolls, plastics, derelict fishing gear and other marine debris is present in nests along the beach and often consumed by albatross chicks. More than five tons of plastics end up on Midway Atoll each year because adult albatrosses feed their chicks plastics they forage in the ocean, mistaken for food. Plastics break down into smaller pieces but never go away, affecting all levels of the ocean ecosystem.

"Marine debris are not something you can clean up just once; it takes a sustained effort over time," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Superintendent Matt Brown. "By working with the state of Hawaii, Office of Hawaiian Affairs and NOAA, we can accomplish more than any one agency on its own to clean up marine debris and educate the public to prevent it from entering the ecosystem."

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Each year the USFWS, the State of Hawaii, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration staff and volunteers collect tons of marine debris from the atolls and throughout the Monument.

"With the high rate of marine debris accumulation in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, removing debris is imperative to ensure the health of this valuable habitat and the species that call it home. We are happy to have the opportunity to work with partners on this important initiative," said Mark Manuel, NOAA Marine Debris Program Pacific Islands Regional Coordinator.

This marine debris removal effort represents a collaborative partnership between the USFWS, State of Hawai'i DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife, NOAA's Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center, NOAA's Marine Debris Program, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Special thanks go to Nets to Energy Program, Schnitzer Steel Co. and Covanta Honolulu/H-POWER for their support of this project.

For photos of marine debris and the marine debris removal: [bit.ly/MarineDebrisPhotos](http://bit.ly/MarineDebrisPhotos)

For a shareable, social media friendly version of the release: [bit.ly/CleanupMarineDebris2017](http://bit.ly/CleanupMarineDebris2017)

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*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. Four co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, State of Hawai'i and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs - protect this special place. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was inscribed as the first mixed (natural and cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Site in the United States in July 2010. For more information, please visit [www.papahanaumokuakea.gov](http://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov).*

