

PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA

Marine National Monument

NEWS RELEASE

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Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument Marks Major Milestones World Heritage Inscription and Anniversary of Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Recognized

(Honolulu, HI) Hundreds of conservation managers, marine scientists, conservation activists, political leaders and policy makers helped celebrate two globally significant milestones for Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument today at the Hawai'i Convention Center.

Highlighting the event was the commemoration of Papahānaumokuākea's inscription on the World Heritage List. High-level representatives of the State of Hawai'i, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of the Interior, and U.S. State Department joined in an official inscription ceremony to recognize Papahānaumokuākea as a place of universally outstanding natural and cultural features.

"The inscription of Papahānaumokuākea reflects U.S. efforts to strengthen our engagement at the United Nations and at UNESCO," said Esther Brimmer, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs. "It is also an opportunity to recognize the important role of the World Heritage Convention, which, four decades after its adoption by the General Conference of UNESCO, remains a crucial international instrument for the protection and promotion of cultural and natural heritage."

"It is fitting that our Nation's first inscription in 15 years recognizes a place with such unique cultural and natural heritage," said Tom Strickland, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. "The addition of Papahānaumokuākea to the network of World Heritage Sites demonstrates the commitment of the United States and the state of Hawai'i to conserve and protect our important marine sites."

In recognizing the designation of Papahānaumokuākea as a World Heritage site, Dr. Larry Robinson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Conservation and Management, said, "As one of the crown jewels of the National Marine Sanctuary System, Papahānaumokuākea is a remarkable treasure trove of biodiversity, a sentinel site for helping measure the impacts of global climate change, and as the UNESCO World Heritage Committee acknowledged four months ago, a place that is truly deserving of global recognition for its universally outstanding natural and cultural features."

"As a World Heritage site, Papahānaumokuākea will give people from across the globe a greater appreciation of the importance of protecting our natural and cultural resources – values that native Hawaiians and all the people of Hawai'i hold dear," said Governor Linda Lingle. "The inscription of Papahānaumokuākea on the World Heritage List is the culmination of the hard work, dedication and love for these special islands by countless individuals throughout Hawai'i and our nation."

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On July 30, 2010, Papahānaumokuākea was designated as the first mixed UNESCO World Heritage site in the United States. It is the world's first cultural seascape recognized for its continuing connections to living indigenous people.

Kicking off the event was the 10th anniversary commemoration of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve (NWHICRER), established by President Bill Clinton on Dec. 4, 2000. At that time, the Reserve became the single largest nature preserve ever established in the United States. Calling the designation "a bold and visionary action," President Clinton recognized the work of an unprecedented coalition of government agencies, conservation groups and concerned citizens for "[a] big step forward, not only for the U.S., but for the oceans around the world...setting a new global standard for coral reef and wildlife protection." The Reserve is now part of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, created by President George W. Bush in 2006.

The NWHICRER 10th anniversary recognition included reflections from the chairperson of the Reserve Advisory Council, Tim Johns. He said, "I think it's one of the last great places left on earth. It's been protected for a lot of years just by its distance from man, but when you get up there you realize that there are still places on this earth, where the hand of God still touches the earth. And so just knowing that a place like that is still existing, and is now going to be protected in perpetuity is just a really great thing."

Johns and other members of the council have donated thousands of hours of time to advising Reserve managers and have been instrumental in pushing for the high levels of protection that now make Papahānaumokuākea one of the most stringently protected marine areas on the planet. Two founding members of the council and valued kupuna Laura Thompson and Buzzy Agard were also recognized during the event, along with the late Dr. Isabella Abbott and others who have passed.

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument 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. Papahānaumokuākea 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

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