



## Setting Sail! Field Season 2024

Papahānaumokuākea's signature coral reef monitoring cruise, the Reef Assessment and Monitoring Program (RAMP), will spend 25 days at sea aboard NOAA ship *Oscar Elton Sette* in September. Primary projects include documenting recovery of reefs at Lalo destroyed by Hurricane Walaka in 2018, documenting the recovery of corals at Kapou (Lisianski) in the wake of the 2015 mass coral bleaching event, and continued research on the recently discovered invasive alga, *Chondria tumulosa*, at Manawai (Pearl and Hermes Atoll). Civil Beat reporter Nathan Eagle will sail on the cruise, ultimately releasing a series of articles on Papahānaumokuākea in the fall.

NOAA ship *Okeanos Explorer* will be conducting the "Beyond the Blue: Illuminating the Pacific" campaign in 2024, with three cruises to the monument between June and October. *Okeanos* will be conducting high resolution multibeam mapping of deepwater areas. Two berths onboard are dedicated for Native Hawaiian cultural liaisons. Malia Evans, O'ahu Outreach and Education Coordinator for Papahānaumokuākea, and University of Hawai'i at Hilo student Makoa Pascoe will facilitate cultural protocols and reciprocal knowledge exchange. By equally valuing Indigenous knowledge systems, values, life experiences, and practices, a holistic understanding of the biocultural oceanscape of Papahānaumokuākea and Hawaiian culture is elevated.

To celebrate the "Beyond the Blue: Illuminating the Pacific", NOAA ship *Okeanos Explorer* will spend a week at the Hilo port on Hawai'i Island in September. The *Okeanos Explorer* education and research team will host guided ship tours, educational workshops at Mokupāpapa Discovery Center, and an arts and science mural experience for school groups and the Hilo community. Collectively, these activities and experiences will celebrate Papahānaumokuākea, uplift the next generation of marine stewards, and bring communities together to learn more about deep sea exploration.



Collaborative team works to remove a massive buried derelict fishing net from the shoreline of Kuaihelani. Photo: Andy Sullivan-Haskins/PMDP

## 70,080 Pounds of Marine Debris Removed from Papahānaumokuākea

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument's Marine Research Technician and a team of eleven others recently returned from a marine debris removal mission at Kuaihelani (Midway Atoll) under the O'ahu-based nonprofit Papahānaumokuākea Marine Debris Project (PMDP) in collaboration with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The goals of this mission were to remove 35,000 pounds of marine debris, protect wildlife from anthropogenic influence, and help restore the shoreline to its natural state. After the 19-day cleanup mission, these goals were more than achieved. The PMDP team cleaned a total of 10.7 miles of shoreline within Kuaihelani, including Eastern, Spit, and Sand Islands, collecting a staggering total of 70,080 pounds of marine debris. This first mission of the season brought the to-date total of marine debris removed from the monument by PMDP to 785,000 pounds, with two more ship-based missions scheduled for this summer.

The mission was an incredible success for both PMDP and USFWS - not only in rehabilitating Kuaihelani to rid it of environmental hazards but also as a push toward collaborative efforts to protect the atolls of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The NOAA Marine Debris Program is supporting this work through a 5-year grant to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation using \$5.8M in funding provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.



# National Marine Sanctuary Designation for Papahānaumokuākea Update

A national marine sanctuary in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands has been envisioned for over twenty years, and was the driver behind the creation of the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve and the marine national monument. Decades of layered protections, and managing agency coordination, have been the hallmarks of responsible, citizen-driven management for this unique region and this is the next logical step. Sanctuary designation will add to the existing protections, bring valuable tools to management, unify the regulatory framework across the marine area, and bring the expertise of the nation's premiere network of marine protected areas. NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, guided by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, has been managing our nation's network of underwater parks since 1972, and similar to National Parks, National Marine Sanctuaries are our parks of the oceans and Great Lakes.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has been a key partner and co-managing agency in the management of Papahānaumokuākea since the initial designation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve in 2000. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries will continue to work collaboratively with the Papahānaumokuākea Monument Management Board to conduct, support and promote research, characterization and long term monitoring of marine ecosystems and species, and cultural and maritime heritage resources of Papahānaumokuākea. Sanctuary designation will ensure the full benefits and expertise offered by the National Marine Sanctuary System and staff.

## Sanctuary Proposal

NOAA has proposed a sanctuary area of approximately 582,250 square miles, coextensive with the existing Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and the Monument Expansion Area. The boundary includes the marine environment surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands from the shoreline of the islands and atolls seaward to 200 nautical miles, including all state waters and waters of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, Midway Atoll and Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuges, and state of Hawai'i Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine Refuge.

## The Designation Timeline



Large-scale conservation areas such as this are important to protect highly mobile species, such as sharks and marine mammals. They also protect entire ecosystems, preserving critical ecological functions and conserving biodiversity.

After receiving public comments and conducting public meetings, NOAA is making adjustments to the proposal and is preparing final designation documents. The final documents are expected to be published in Winter of 2024, with potential sanctuary designation slated for early 2025.





## Superintendent's Corner

I can't believe how fast time flies by when you're having fun. The last time I wrote for our newsletter, we were wrapping up 2023 and reflecting on all of the great science, conservation, and outreach and education efforts we supported throughout the year. Today as I write this, we continue our work in support of the national marine sanctuary designation process, having just completed our public comment period on the draft sanctuary documents. During the month of April, our staff and partners hosted eleven public meetings across the state during a thirteen-

day period. It was a lot of work, and it was also an amazing opportunity to get back out into the communities that have supported Papahānaumokuākea for so many years. I want to thank all of you that came out to our public meetings and provided verbal and written feedback. In the end, we ended up with over 13,500 comments, and we continue to review those now to ensure that they inform the next steps in the sanctuary designation process. Mahalo and imua Papahānaumokuākea!

*Eric Roberts*



*Educators identify the earth systems connecting and shaping their school sites.*

## Climate Change Education for Resilience

We already are seeing the impacts of climate change in our national marine sanctuaries and surrounding communities, and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is no different. Ecosystems are experiencing rising water temperatures and sea levels, water that is more acidic and contains less oxygen, shifting species, and altered weather patterns and storms. These new challenges build on existing non-climate stressors on the marine environment, such as overfishing, marine debris, habitat loss and land-based sources of pollution. Protecting large-scale marine areas like Papahānaumokuākea are increasingly seen as key actions to protect biodiversity and build ecosystem resilience.

Just as important is to develop a climate-literate community empowered to build resilience within our Earth system. In January, 2024, PMNM staff collaborated with others to

welcome 43 formal and informal educators for two intensive three-day Earth to Sky climate change workshops held first on O'ahu at the Daniel K. Inouye Regional Center (25 educators) and then on Hawai'i Island at the Mokupāpapa Discovery Center and Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (18 educators). Workshop participants annually engage nearly 26,000 students. The goals of the workshop were to build pilina (relationships) with people and place, to develop an understanding of climate science and familiarity with tools specific to Hawai'i, to engage educators with climate science researchers and other climate educators, and to support participants to develop classroom and place-based climate change learning products by the end of the school year. Learn more about climate science in your national marine sanctuaries on our [website](#).

## Welcome to the Team

### Lasha-Lynn Salbosa

We welcome back into our 'ohana (family) Lasha-Lynn Salbosa as our new Deputy Superintendent of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Lasha-Lynn previously worked for the monument from 2008-2012 as the Policy and Permit Specialist. She comes to us from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, where she spent 10 and a half years working with the Department of Defense and the renewable energy industry on resolving conflicts between the legitimate use of natural resources and endangered species conservation for the Pacific Islands region. Prior to that she served as the Conservation Initiatives Coordinator for the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources. Lasha-Lynn has a passion for mindful leadership and balanced management and is an advocate for collaborative conservation. As a member of the Native Hawaiian Community, she is a staunch supporter of meaningful indigenous community engagement. Aloha, Lasha!

## Jesi Quan Bautista

Meet The Staff



### What is your role and how long have you worked at PMNM?

I recently joined PMNM in December 2023 to support the Policy and Planning team in the sanctuary designation process for Papahānaumokuākea.

### What is your background prior to working at PMNM?

My first experience in the marine conservation space began as an intern with the Guam Community Coral Reef Monitoring Program. I then joined the NOAA Pacific Marine National Monument Program and supported various initiatives for the Pacific Remote Islands and Marianas Trench Marine National Monuments. While in graduate school, I worked on several media and educational projects focused on Micronesia with Breadfruit Educational Productions. Outside of my working hours, I work closely alongside Mālama Moana and Friends of Kewalos, which both serve to care for a place on the south shore of O'ahu that is dear to my heart.

### What are you working on now?

Now that the public comment period of the sanctuary designation process has ended, I am working with staff to review all comments that were submitted. One of my favorite parts has been reading and learning about people's connections to and hopes for Papahānaumokuākea, including about a hundred comments written by local Hawai'i elementary students and their ideas for this seascape.

### What do you enjoy about working at PMNM?

I feel very fortunate to be in this space and to witness all the staff – their dedication, service, and love for Papahānaumokuākea.

### What is your hope for PMNM in the future?

So many organizations and community groups across Oceania are doing incredible work in the marine conservation space. With the sanctuary designation process taking place, I hope this will bring light to Papahānaumokuākea and ignite new collaborations and partnerships with other ocean stewardship groups across the Pacific.

## The First Chondria Conference

Alien invasive species (AIS) pose a serious threat to Papahānaumokuākea. Without native predators keeping their population size in check, AIS can grow rapidly and outcompete other organisms. This disruptive unbalance in the ecosystem can lead to dramatic changes, something seen at Manawai (Pearl and Hermes Atoll), where thick blankets of *Chondria tumulosa* have grown over and smothered reefs. The remoteness of Papahānaumokuākea is part of what makes it special, but it also makes conducting research there challenging.

*Chondria tumulosa* was first discovered in 2016. Since then, there have been ~47 days in the monument available for hands-on work with *C. tumulosa*. This May, *Chondria* researchers and managers gathered for the first *Chondria*-focused Conference, "ChonCon".

The 76 participants (representing 17 different organizations) learned the most up-to-date information on how *C. tumulosa* grows, reproduces, and impacts the reef habitat under it, and the reef fish around it. Experts in the field discussed different methods to avoid transporting *C. tumulosa* to new places, challenges linked to managing marine debris, and cutting-edge early detection methods.

In addition to 20 different talks, ChonCon included hands-on training with previously frozen *C. tumulosa* – the first time many managers and scientists have seen *C. tumulosa* in person. The day ended with a discussion panel geared to link the science with manager needs, and to identify key knowledge gaps for advancing AIS management strategies.

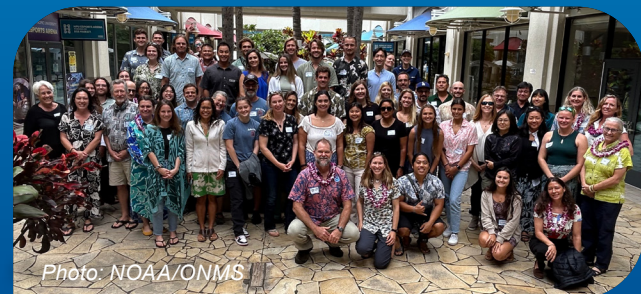


Photo: NOAA/ONMS

ChonCon brought together researchers and managers focused on the threat of AIS, specifically *Chondria tumulosa*, within PMNM.

CONNECT WITH US    [papahanaumokuakea.gov](https://papahanaumokuakea.gov)

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument  
NOAA/Daniel K. Inouye Regional Center  
1845 Wasp Blvd, Building 176  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96818 | Phone: 808-725-5800

Mokupāpapa Discovery Center  
76 Kamehameha Avenue  
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720  
Phone: 808-498-4709

Papahānaumokuākea is co-managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Hawai'i, and Office of Hawaiian Affairs. This newsletter highlights some of the initiatives of the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and partners.