



Protecting Native Hawaiian Traditional and Customary Rights
and Our Fragile Environment

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For Immediate Release

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**"NWHI HUI" RELEASES DETAILED CRITIQUE OF THE PROPOSED MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR
THE PAPAHAŪNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT**

*The fragile Northwestern Hawaiian Islands endangered by
irresponsible management plan and lack of public oversight*

HONOLULU, HAWAII A coalition of three environmental and cultural rights groups are calling for major changes in the proposed 15 year management plan for the Papahānaumokuākea Marine Monument. In a detailed analysis released today, members of KAHEA: The Hawaiian Environmental Alliance, Sierra Club, and the Ilioulaokalani Coalition (also known as the "NWHI hui"), conclude the draft plan currently falls far short of the level of protections promised for the fragile chain of reefs and atolls of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

"This plan was to be the golden opportunity to look at full conservation of a fragile coral reef ecosystem and perpetuation of our unique Hawaiian culture. Instead, we see over a quarter of a billion dollars in public money going to open this place up for increased tourism, research, and military use, with little dedicated to reducing the impact of human activity there," said Marti Townsend, Program Director for KAHEA. "For example, over 50% of the proposed budget is for government operations and scientific research, while a mere 12% goes to reducing existing threats, like clean up of marine debris and legacy military contamination."

According to the NWHI hui's analysis, the proposed plan has shifted the focus of management away from full conservation, and instead promotes expanded human use of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. The current draft, issued by the Department of Commerce, Department of Interior and the State of Hawai'i, fails to limit or mitigate the U.S. Navy's plans to expand military exercises in the Monument, and includes proposals to increase extractive research, eco tourism, and vessel traffic in these fragile atolls.

This critique details ten key shortcomings that need to be addressed to ensure the highest degree of protection for this pristine natural area. National marine advocates like the National Wildlife Federation and the Center for Biological Diversity, joined more than a dozen organizations representing over 5 million people in a joint letter of concern highlighting the shortcomings identified in the NWHI hui analysis.

Key among the concerns is the abandonment of the "precautionary principle," which requires biological, cultural and historic resource integrity be favored when the impacts of any proposed activity are uncertain. In addition to problems associated with proposed increases human

activity and a lack of controls on military activities, other key concerns identified by the NWHI hui include: no ban on biosprospecting, lax and undefined enforcement protocols, insufficient resources for Native Hawaiians involvement in Monument decision making, poorly defined permitting process, an inadequate Cultural Impact Assessment. The draft plan also fails to establish a public advisory body for the Monument.

This analysis was developed in response to a 75 day request for public comment on the 1,200 page management plan and environmental assessment, which sets out 15 years of actions for managing the vast, remote 84 million acre Marine National Monument. The "NWHI hui" was among the first to propose that a Monument be established in our Kupuna Islands, and since 2000 have been consistently working for the strongest possible protections in this ecologically significant and culturally sacred region.

The Monument was established in 2006 to protect the resources of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, a network of coral reefs, islands, atolls, and shoals that arches through the Pacific for 1,200 miles northwest of the Main Hawaiian Islands. Celebrated in stories of creation as the place where Hawai'i began, these ancient islands are often described as the kupuna, or ancestors, of the Main Hawaiian Islands and their survival as one of the earth's last remaining large scale coral reef ecosystems is a critical issue for the Pacific region and the entire planet. The ecosystem contains over 3.5 million acres of some of the world's oldest living coral colonies, home to 7,000 marine species. 95% of the remaining population of highly endangered more Hawaiian monk seals call the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands home.

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If you would like more information about this critical conservation and cultural protection issue in Hawai'i, visit www.kahea.org or contact Marti Townsend at 1 888 528 6288 or marti@kahea.org to schedule an interview.

KAHEA: The Hawaiian Environmental Alliance is a grassroots non profit working to secure protections for something of the most ecologically unique and culturally sacred places in Hawai'i.