

**From:** Bowman, Randal  
**To:** [Michael Weiss - NOAA Federal](#)  
**Subject:** Re: delay in transferring marine monument comments  
**Date:** Thursday, July 27, 2017 11:11:33 AM  
**Attachments:** [New info comments, marine.docx](#)

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System is working again. Attached are all 8 of the comments coded as "new information" and referencing marine monuments to date; the final set of comments is still being uploaded, and there are a few thousand comments from earlier still being reviewed.

It was easier to copy these than to go through the "export file" process, given the few comments. Some of our reviewers do not seem to share my concept of what "new information" is, but I'm sending them all anyhow. I did no editing except removing double/tripple-spacing between paragraphs in one comment.

On Thu, Jul 27, 2017 at 6:02 AM, Michael Weiss - NOAA Federal  
<[michael.weiss@noaa.gov](mailto:michael.weiss@noaa.gov)> wrote:

Morning.

Ok, thanks for the update. If there is any way to get the few new information comments over today, that would be appreciated.

On Wed, Jul 26, 2017 at 4:16 PM, Bowman, Randal <[randal\\_bowman@ios.doi.gov](mailto:randal_bowman@ios.doi.gov)> wrote:

Our contractor's system is experiencing delays in uploading the last round of comments from [regs.gov](https://www.regulations.gov), for some of the same reasons regs. had trouble with them, including many attachments with hand-written post cards eating up computer processing capacity. The search function is working irregularly as a result.

This should be resolved in a day or so, and I will start sorting the marine comments out and sending them over next week - I will be gone and not able to access email from mid-afternoon tomorrow until mid-afternoon Monday,

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Michael Weiss  
Office of the Under Secretary  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
202-482-5958 (w)  
(b) (6) (c)

**1st comment -**

Please keep the protections in place for these treasures! Our future children will thank you !

The country's marine national monuments, which are home to a tremendous diversity and richness of ocean life, are of significant scientific, historic, and cultural value. Designated under the Antiquities Act, the Papahnaumokuakea, Pacific Remote Islands, Rose Atoll, Marianas Trench, and Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monuments constitute the first generation of blue parks bestowed on our nation.

An attempt to roll back protections on any one of these monuments imperils our country's cultural and scientific legacy, and we strongly urge you to maintain the current protections for all marine national monuments.

The Antiquities Act, signed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906, safeguards and preserves U.S. public lands and waters that contain objects of historic or scientific interest. Sixteen past presidents - eight Republicans and eight Democrats - have used this authority to designate over 150 monuments, thereby preserving our special places at sea and on land for future generations of Americans.

Although two-thirds of the planet's surface is water, we have been slow to recognize the importance of protecting the marine environment. This is changing, thanks to U.S. leadership. Our diverse U.S. marine monuments protect a rich array of ocean species and their habitats, provide nursery and spawning habitats for commercially-valuable fish and crustacean populations, and offer sought-after recreational angling opportunities. Deep-sea ecosystems in the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts are home to sperm whales, Atlantic puffins, and lush deep sea coral gardens, including one of the planet's oldest organisms, black corals, and other species that may contain chemical compounds of biomedical importance. The expansion of Papahnaumokuakea prevents sharks, sea turtles, sea birds, and marine mammals from being caught by longline fishing and helps safeguard the traditional culture of the Native Hawaiian community.

I am confident that your reviews pursuant to President Trump's executive orders will find each marine national monument was created or expanded squarely within the authority of the Antiquities Act, and each was established with broad public support and significant input from the local community.

I write to add my voice, to show that there is a strong desire from the public that the U.S. recognize the value of its diverse marine ecosystems, and not alter or eliminate any of the protections for the marine national monuments.

I urge you to support the following list of National Monuments and recommend that our current national monuments remain as they are today. Please accept this letter as an official public comment for Docket No. DOI-2017-0002.

AMERICAN SAMOA  
Rose Atoll

HAWAII  
Papahnaumokukea

NEW ENGLAND  
Northeast Canyons and Seamounts

PACIFIC OCEAN  
Marianas Trench  
Pacific Remote Islands

**2<sup>nd</sup> comment –**

Please protect the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument. This 20 acres of land and 1,600 acres of lagoon is one of the most pristine atolls in the world and also one of the last remaining refuges for seabirds and turtle species of the central Pacific. So many important species, and so much scientific knowledge resides here. Please keep it safe from greedy development plans.

**3<sup>rd</sup> comment –**

I support the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument as it was designated on September 15, 2016. Please do not modify its boundaries, management, or allowed uses. The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Monument fulfills the criteria under review by Executive Orders 13792 and 13795. It meets the requirements and original objectives of the Antiquities Act, including by being the smallest area compatible with protecting the monument's highly significant scientific, ecological, and geologic features. The monument boundaries and uses were strongly shaped by an extensive yearlong public and stakeholder consultation. The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument is a unique place that is home to our region's most dramatic ocean features. The area encompasses the only four seamounts in the U.S. Atlantic Ocean as well as three canyons deeper than the Grand Canyon. Scientists have shown it is a biodiversity hot spot, home to many rare and unique species. Ancient deep-sea coral communities thrive in the canyons and on the seamounts, and endangered whales, sea turtles, and seabirds feed in the nutrient-rich water above. Scientists conducting underwater research regularly discover new species on expeditions here. Scientists consider the habitats and rare species in the monument to be highly sensitive, with long recovery times. The area is vulnerable to the impacts of commercial fishing, offshore oil and gas drilling, and climate change. Commercial fishing gear, for example, can physically damage fragile centuries-old corals and ensnare marine mammals, sea birds, and sea turtles. National parks and public lands and waters help define who we are as a nation, and are an important part of our historical, cultural, and natural heritage. Sixteen presidents from both parties have created national monuments to protect stunning and vulnerable land and ocean areas. There are more than 150 monuments protected for future generations. Legal scholars agree: No president has the legal authority to eliminate or significantly alter a national park or national monument. (See: [here](#) and [here](#).) No president has attempted to revoke a predecessor's monument designation, even where some public disagreement over the designation existed. Hundreds of thousands of people - including scientists, businesses, aquariums, educational organizations, faith-based groups, and elected officials - expressed support for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts monument. A 2016 poll conducted by Edge Research, a non-partisan research firm, found that 80% of people in Massachusetts and Rhode Island supported

permanently protecting special places in the ocean from development. Majority support was sustained across all political affiliations. These findings are consistent with nationwide polls about monuments and public lands and waters. Officials met numerous times with stakeholders - including fishing industry representatives and conservation groups - in New England and Washington, DC. Elected officials were extensively consulted. Fishing industry representatives acknowledge they were actively engaged in the process for more than a year before the monument was ultimately designated. The Department of Commerce held a town hall meeting in New England and accepted written public comments for a year. The monument was carefully designed to protect the intended resources while minimizing impacts to the fishing industry: the boundaries were significantly downsized from what was originally proposed, and lobsterpot and crab fishermen are allowed to continue fishing in the monument for seven years before they have to move to different areas to fish. The monument area was historically among the least fished areas in the region and is less than 1.5% of U.S. ocean waters along the Atlantic coast. Protecting this small, sensitive, and scientifically valuable area from fishing does not change the catch limits for any fishery or otherwise threaten the fishing industry - it simply means fishing cannot occur in this specific area. We must protect the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts, and all monuments in the ocean and on land from harm, so future generations of Americans can enjoy and benefit from them

#### **4<sup>th</sup> comment –**

As a citizen born in Hawaii and a proud supporter of our National Wildlife Refuge System, I urge you to leave the Refuge System's six national monuments under review intact:

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (MNM), Pacific Remote Islands MNM, Marianas Trench MNM, Rose Atoll MNM, Northeast Canyons and Seamounts MNM, and Hanford Reach National Monument.

Our five marine national monuments safeguard scientific, historic, and cultural resources for the benefit of all and future generations of Americans. All are units of the Refuge System, and 12 individual national wildlife refuges are located within their borders. Rescinding or scaling back these monuments would expose these irreplaceable sites to a suite of threats that they were specifically established to address including: illegal, underreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, overfishing, pollution, climate change impacts, and deep sea mining among many others. It is important to note that as part of the Refuge System, these waters are open for recreational fishing where appropriate and with a permit, as part of the Big Six recreational uses on refuges - hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

Our marine national monuments have enjoyed broad public and bipartisan support since their establishment. President George W. Bush first established Papahānaumokuākea MNM in 2006, and would later go on to designate the Pacific's three other marine national monuments. President Barack Obama built upon President Bush's conservation legacy by expanding both Papahānaumokuākea and Pacific Remote Islands MNMs, and by establishing the first Atlantic marine national monument with the designation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts MNM. Our marine national monuments were designated and expanded after rigorous public input, and the final boundaries reflect the comments and concerns offered by private citizens, native Hawaiians, recreational fishermen, the commercial fishing industry, the conservation community, local, state and federal lawmakers, and the scientific community.

Marine national monuments support untold thousands of marine species throughout their diverse array of habitats, which include tropical reefs, seamounts, hydrothermal vents, deep-sea coral, and open water. Scientists are only beginning to unlock the secrets of these mysterious ecosystems, and without adequate protections we could lose them before even scratching the surface of their full potential.

The biodiversity found in our marine national monuments rivals that of the world's tropical rainforests. Millions of seabirds, endangered Hawaiian monk seals, green sea turtles, and countless other species thrive within these unique and threatened ecosystems. The seabird species that nest on the islands and atolls within the monuments, like the tens of thousands of Laysan albatross that nest on Papahānaumokuākea's Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, also fish in the surrounding marine monument waters and benefit from these protections.

As global fisheries teeter on the brink of collapse, marine national monuments are essential to restore commercial fish stocks. Tuna, swordfish, and other commercial pelagic fish species can begin to rebound in the monument waters, which will in turn bolster catch size and yield for the commercial fishing industry.

The revolutionary protections afforded by marine national monuments allow for successful conservation across entire ecosystems. With much of our country's wildlife at risk, these monuments in particular offer rare protection for our treasured coral reefs, seabirds, whales, sea turtles, and thousands of other species. Each monument possesses historical significance, offers scientific discovery potential, preserves economic resources, protects our national security, and sustains invaluable environments for years to come.

Rescinding or shrinking our marine national monuments would be a disastrous setback for these marine ecosystems and for the wildlife and people who depend on them for survival, and I urge you to take no action on the National Wildlife Refuge System's six national monuments.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> comment –**

The notice and request for comments states that in a separate but related process certain Marine National Monuments, specifically five Marine National Monuments included in the 27 total existing national monuments under review, will also be reviewed according to section 4 of Executive Order 13795 of April 28, 2017, "Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy" (82 FR 20815, May 3, 2017).

Executive Order 13795 implementing an offshore energy strategy appears to not be applicable to establishing or maintaining Marine National Monuments under the Antiquities Act. The Antiquities Act does not require areas designated for national monuments, including Marine National Monuments, to be evaluated according to any Federal energy strategy. Therefore, such review would appear to overreach the Constitutional executive powers of the Executive Branch and infringe on the Constitutional legislative powers of the Congress. The review of the five Marine National Monuments under this notice and request for comments should not include any review pursuant to Executive Order 13795 or any other Federal energy policy.

**6<sup>th</sup> comment –**

I support NORTHEAST CANYONS AND SEAMOUNTS NATIONAL MONUMENT as established by proclamation.

Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument - the smallest of the five marine national monuments under review, and the only marine national monument in the Atlantic - protects a fragile and unique segment of marine biodiversity. The monument preserves a unique geology of underwater mountains and canyons, and is home to various rare and endangered flora and fauna, including several species of whales and sea turtles. Its establishment was supported by a variety of stakeholders including conservationists, community members, fishermen, and local businesses. After a considerable review process, the footprint of the monument was reduced by 40% in consideration of those whose livelihoods would be impacted by the increased level of protection, and also integrated a staged phase-out program for those fishermen who would be most impacted by the new protections. In spite of these considerations, some of those fishermen who wish that no restrictions at all be placed on their activities have filed a lawsuit - but their disgruntlement does not mitigate the urgent need to protect the threatened ecosystems of our oceans in some way. I have deep roots in New England - my earliest American ancestor arrived in Massachusetts 390 years ago - and as a descendent of shipwrights and sailmakers, the health of our oceans matters very much to me. The area of Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument includes about 1.5% of US-controlled Atlantic waters, leaving the other 98.5% available for exploitation. The preservation of that comparatively small patch of ocean seems a small price to pay to preserve and protect the biodiversity and unique geology contained within this national monument. I urge you, therefore, to retain Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monument as it stands. To kill our oceans is to kill ourselves

**7<sup>th</sup> comment –**

Thirty years ago I realized that my childhood concept of a healthy marine environment was badly misinformed. This occurred when I had the opportunity in graduate school to work in one of the most remote coral reef atolls in the world, Johnston Atoll, 860 miles southwest of Hawaii. For four years I studied what was a near-pristine marine ecosystem in the waters surrounding Johnston Atoll. I have published multiple scientific papers based on my observations of spawning aggregations of coral reef fishes at Johnston Atoll, a phenomena that is rare and hard to observe in most U.S. reef habitats that are exposed to commercial and recreational fishing practices. I was elated when the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRINMM) was expanded in 2014 to include Johnson Atoll and its surrounding waters. The atolls and waters that make up this marine sanctuary in the Central Pacific Ocean are far removed from human inhabitants but not removed from human impacts. They are home to countless species of marine mammals, fishes, sea turtles, corals, invertebrates, microbes, and algae. Nineteen different species of seabirds, numbering in the millions, depend on the uninhabited islands for nesting and the protected waters for feeding. The oceanic waters around the islands are of global importance for large predatory fishes like silky and oceanic whitetip sharks, and bigeye and yellowfin tuna; whose populations have greatly declined across the world's oceans in the last decades. Expanding the marine monument prevents overfishing of these vulnerable resources and can aid in replenishing depleted stocks elsewhere. The expanded monument also protects endangered sea turtles and seabirds from being

inadvertently killed by longlines and purse seine nets used to target tuna in the Central Pacific Ocean. Despite the proven importance of the oceans to our global environment and to global economics, less than three percent of oceans are fully protected from damaging extractive practices. The expansion of PRINMM came in response to overwhelming support from Native Hawaiian leaders, scientists, businesses, and conservation groups as well as more than 170,000 citizen comments. Major modifications were made to the size and scale of PRINM in order to appease the interests of American commercial fishermen. The expanded protection strikes a balance between present and future economic and environmental needs. Any further reductions, or access of deep-sea mining operations to the monument areas, would be detrimental to one of the goals of this Marine Monument: preserve in perpetuity these remote marine habitats. Environmental conservation has a long bipartisan history in this country and presidents of both parties have routinely used this power. The Grand Canyon was originally protected as a monument by President Theodore Roosevelt. President George W. Bush created four marine national monuments, including the initial protection of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Marine Monument. I do not understand the recent obsession with reducing or eliminating the protection of U.S. National Marine Monuments. Since 2009, when President Bush first designated PRINMM, scientists working in the monument waters have shown that protecting marine biodiversity can buffer human impacts. Healthy, abundant, pristine living marine resources make ocean ecosystems more resilient to commercial fishing, ocean warming and invasive species. I ask the present administration not to reduce the area of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Marine Monument (PRINMM).

**8<sup>th</sup> comment –**

Protection of the Marianas Trench, Rose Island and Papahānumokuākea Marine National Monuments are vital to the health and security of the USA's fishery management. The Rose Island area is the home of coral spawning that drifts across the Pacific. The Papahānumokuākea area helps keep the entire Pacific stocked with Tuna. Not only are the monuments vital, but they deserve more federal resources to better serve our growing population.