

Pacific Marine Conservation Assessment

Overview of Presentation

- Presidential Memo
- Description of Areas Under Consideration
- Assessment and Recommendation Process
- Ways to Provide Public Comments
- Format of Today's Open House

Presidential Memo - Background

- August 25, 2008
- To the Secretaries of Defense, Interior, and Commerce, and the Chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality

"Please provide to me your assessment, with relevant supporting information, including the views of the territorial and local governments and other interested parties, of the advisability of providing additional recognition, protection or improved conservation and management for objects of historic or scientific interest at these islands, coral reefs, geologic features and surrounding marine waters" [of the identified central and western Pacific areas].

Presidential Memo - Background

- The memo outlines the geographic areas to be considered:
 - Johnston Atoll
 - Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands
 - Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef
 - Wake Atoll
 - Rose Atoll
 - Marine Waters around the northern islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, including the Mariana Trench
- The memo also identifies potential authorities available for the President to take action:
 - Executive Order
 - Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
 - Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act
 - National Marine Sanctuaries Act
 - Antiquities Act

Presidential Memo – Assessment

Assessment:

- Of the “*the advisability of providing additional recognition, protection, or improved conservation and management of objects of historic and scientific interest at these islands, coral reefs, geologic features and surrounding marine waters*”
- Directed to Include:
 - Relevant supporting information
 - Views of territorial and local governments and other interested parties

Presidential Memo – Assessment

Assessment and recommendation (ctd):

- Consider cultural, environmental, economic, and multiple use implications
- Consider compatibility, if applicable, with sustaining access to recreational and commercial fishing, energy and mineral resources, and opportunities for scientific study
- Should not limit DOD from carrying out missions and operations
- Shall be consistent with freedom of navigation and international law

Areas Under Consideration: Johnston Atoll

- Johnston Atoll is the most isolated atoll in the world – its closest neighbor is 450 nautical miles away.
- A portion of the island is a National Wildlife Refuge managed by the Department of the Interior (DOI). Marine fishery resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) are managed by the Department of Commerce based on fishery management plans developed and recommended by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPFMC) under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.
- The U.S. Navy developed a seaplane base at Johnston in 1936. It was also an airstrip and refueling facility that served as an important link from Hawaii to the western Pacific during WWII. The military infrastructure was removed in 2004 and it has been uninhabited since then.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Johnston Atoll

- Only available nesting area in 750,000 square miles of open ocean; hosts hundreds of thousands of seabirds, several species of which are of regional, national, or international significance.
- An important stepping stone for dispersal of marine life between the Line Islands and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.
- Supports 45 coral species, thriving communities of Table corals, the deepest reef building corals on record, and large populations of hydrozoan corals.
- Supports approximately 300 species of reef fish (including the endemic Nahacky's pygmy angelfish), and many nationally and internationally recognized vulnerable or depleted marine species, including the Green turtle, Hawksbill turtle, pearl oyster, reef sharks, and whales.

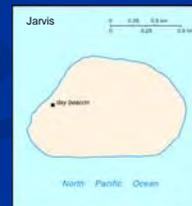


Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands

- Islands are located near the equator.
- All three islands are managed as National Wildlife Refuges by DOI. Marine fishery resources in the EEZ are managed by DOC based on fishery management plans developed and recommended by the WPFMC.
- Howland Island is best known as the intended destination for Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan when they disappeared during their 1937 around-the-world flight. The Amelia Earhart Day Beacon is still standing.

Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information



Areas Under Consideration: Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands

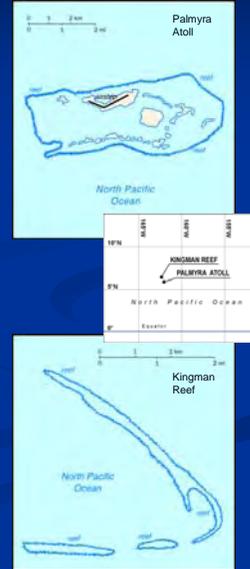
- Millions of seabirds (between 11 and 15 species) crowd these equatorial islands year round to nest and raise their young. These include multiple species of conservation significance.
- Nutrient-rich waters in this area support high levels of marine productivity. Islands are high in coral cover and biodiversity (compared with Hawaii and Florida), support between 284 and 342 species of fish, and are predator dominated systems; biomass of top predators exceeds Great Barrier Reef or Kenyan MPAs.
- Large sharks of many species are abundant at all three islands, especially Jarvis Island.
- Endangered Hawksbill and threatened Green turtles forage in nearshore waters.

Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information



Areas Under Consideration: Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef

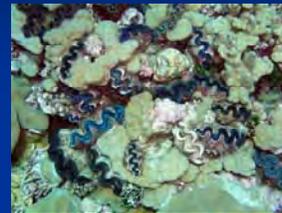
- Northernmost portion of the Line Islands chain.
- Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atolls are managed as National Wildlife Refuges by DOI. Marine fishery resources in the EEZ are managed by DOC based on fishery management plans developed and recommended by the WPFMC.
- In the mid-1930s, Kingman Reef's lagoon provided overnight stop on Pan American flying clipper route from US to American Samoa.
- During WWII, Palmyra hosted 6,000-man Naval Air Station, and was a link in aerial supply routes to the South Pacific.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef

- Palmyra is especially important for seabirds and shorebirds, supporting 11 nesting seabird species (including the third largest Red-footed Booby colony in the world).
- Both Palmyra and Kingman support higher levels of coral and other cnidarian species diversity (180 to 190 species) than any other atoll or reef island in the central Pacific. Kingman Reef is known to be the most undisturbed coral reef in the U.S, with a fully structured inverted food web.
- There are 418 recorded species of fish at Palmyra and 297 at Kingman.
- The waters of Palmyra and Kingman support reef sharks, Giant clams, coconut crabs, grouper, Bumphead parrotfish, Napoleon wrasse, Pearl oysters, Green turtles, Hawksbill turtles, and large schools of rare Melon-headed whales.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Wake Atoll

- Very isolated atoll – its closest neighbor is 260 nautical miles away (Taongi Atoll). It is also the northernmost atoll in the Marshall Islands geological ridge, and perhaps the oldest living atoll in the world.
- The island is a U.S. military base operated by the U.S. Air Force.
- Wake Atoll was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985 in recognition for its role in WWII.
- There is a possibly a large number of shipwrecks from WWII in the waters surrounding Wake Atoll.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment
Information

Areas Under Consideration: Wake Atoll

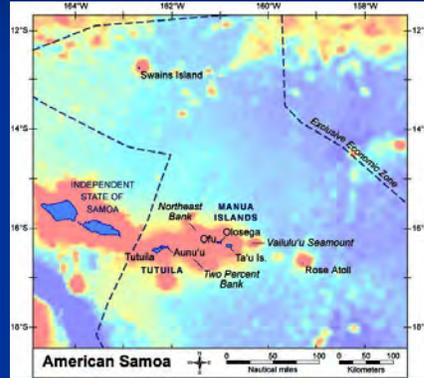
- Supports 12 species of resident nesting seabirds and 6 species of migratory shorebirds (all are populations of regional significance).
- The Black-footed Albatross and the Laysan Albatross recently recolonized the atoll.
- Approximately 100 reported species of corals and at least 323 species of fish. Fish species include globally depleted populations of Napoleon wrasse, sharks, and Bumphead parrotfish.
- Its waters support foraging populations of threatened Green turtles and resident populations of Spinner dolphins.

Data Based on Preliminary Assessment
Information



Areas Under Consideration: Rose Atoll

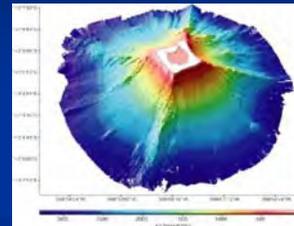
- One of smallest atolls in the world.
- Managed as a National Wildlife Refuge by DOI. Marine fishery resources in the EEZ are managed by DOC based on fishery management plans developed and recommended by the WPFMC.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Rose Atoll

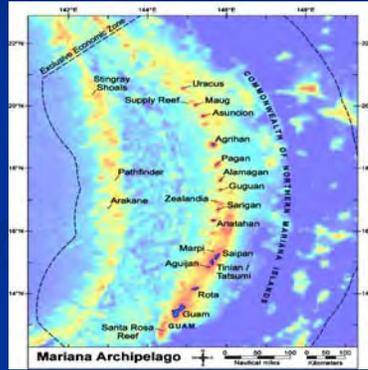
- Provides habitat for 97% of American Samoan seabirds, and is known as “Motu O Manu ” or the “island of seabirds.”
- Contains 113 species of stony corals, with shallow reefs that are dominated by crustose coralline algae (resulting in the pink hue of the fringing reef).
- Supports 272 species of reef fish and more than 500 total species of fish.
- Supports the largest remaining population of Giant clam in Samoa.
- Provides isolated, undisturbed nesting grounds for threatened Green and endangered Hawksbill turtles, and has the largest number of nesting turtles in American Samoa.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Marine Waters around the Northern Islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, including the Mariana Trench

- The Mariana Trench is 1,554 miles long and 44 miles wide. A spot near the southwestern extremity is the deepest known point on earth – the “Challenger Deep” – where the ocean bottom lies at a depth of nearly 7 miles.
- The region is geologically complex, with active volcanism and submarine hot springs.
- Marine fishery resources in the EEZ are managed by DOC based on fishery management plans developed and recommended by the WPFMC.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Marine Waters around the Northern Islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, including the Mariana Trench

- It is the only place on earth with huge active submarine mud volcanoes, which harbor some of the oldest known life forms. The unique volcanic habitats of the Northern reefs also support marine basalt communities.
- The waters of the northern islands are a biodiversity hotspot in the Western Pacific, and include the greatest diversity of seamount and hydrothermal vent life yet discovered. They also contain one of the most diverse collections of stony corals in the Western Pacific.
- Maug Crater represents one of only a handful of places on Earth where photosynthetic and chemosynthetic communities of life are known to come together.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Areas Under Consideration: Marine Waters around the Northern Islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, including the Mariana Trench

- The waters surrounding Uracus, Maug, and Asuncion support some of the largest biomasses of reef fishes in the Mariana Archipelago.
- The marine waters of these areas contain very high numbers of apex predators, including large numbers of sharks.
- The extreme physical and chemical conditions of the submarine volcanoes and trench (hot and cold temperatures, high pressure, and acidic conditions in some locations) result in unique ecosystems and species.



Data Based on Preliminary Assessment Information

Assessment and Recommendation Process

September and October 2008

- The Agencies:
 - Will seek and evaluate information related to:
 - Natural resources
 - Historical resources
 - Cultural resources
 - Current and potential human uses
 - Current management
 - Strategic implications

Assessment and Recommendation Process

September and October 2008 (continued)

- Will conduct public outreach and seek information and input from local and regional partners, and the public
 - Public input is important
 - Holding four open houses
 - Washington DC (October 9)
 - American Samoa (October 9)
 - Hawaii (October 16)
 - Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (October 20)
 - Hold additional meetings with regional officials, scientists, stakeholders, and other interested parties

Assessment and Recommendation Process

- October and November 2008
 - Agencies will synthesize and evaluate public comments and information received during the assessment process
 - Agencies will complete the assessment and recommendations
- November 2008 –January 2009
 - Once the assessment and recommendations are complete, they will be provided to the President for consideration

Ways to Provide Public Input

1. This open house
2. Via email
 - oceans@ceq.eop.gov
3. Via fax
 - 1-202-456-6546
4. Via mail (note: delivery delays of 2-3 weeks possible)
 - Assessment c/o Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20503
5. Drop off locations in American Samoa and the CNMI
 - Visitor center of the National Park of American Samoa in Pago Plaza, Pago Pago, American Samoa, between 8 am and 4:30 pm weekdays
 - Visitor center of the American Memorial Park, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, between 10 am and 5 pm Wednesday through Sunday

The CEQ website (<http://ocean.ceq.gov>) is an information source and conduit for public comment.

ALL COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY OCTOBER 26, 2008

Today's Open House Process

- Round table format with a facilitator and a note taker
- Important issues for discussion or comment
 - Information you can provide on the specific areas being assessed:
 - Natural resources
 - Physical setting
 - Geological structures
 - Ecosystem descriptions
 - Biological characteristics
 - Historical resources
 - Cultural resources
 - Current and potential human uses
 - Current management and coordination
 - Strategic implications

Today's Open House Process

- Important issues for discussion and comment (continued)
 - Are there specific areas, living marine resources, cultural or historic resources, or artifacts of scientific or historical interest?
 - Are there areas, or portions of the areas, worthy of national recognition?
 - Would the areas benefit from improved conservation or management?
 - Should there be additional protections put into place to limit adverse effects from existing or future activities, or to maintain the character and resources of the area?
 - Are there other issues we should take into consideration in our recommendations?

For More Information...

<http://ocean.ceq.gov>

- Copy of the Presidential memo
- Maps of the areas being assessed
- Links to information on scientific and historical resources
- Information on authorities the President can use to take action
- Other information