



Hawaiian green sea turtle and Hawaiian monk seal within Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Photo credit: Mark Sullivan/National Wildlife Refuge Association.

# PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT

## THE PLACE:

[Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument](#) protects a biologically rich area of the Pacific Ocean surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. It encompasses 372.8 million acres, making it one of the largest marine conservation areas in the world. President George W. Bush first [established](#) the national monument in 2006, and 10 years later President Obama [expanded](#) it.

## WHY IT'S SPECIAL:

Home to endangered Hawaiian monk seals and green sea turtles, the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument protects a magnificent stretch of coral reefs teeming with fish and other wildlife. The monument is also a vital breeding ground for millions of seabirds. Many of the animals found here live nowhere else in the world. In fact research missions to the monument have led to the discovery of at least 10 new species never before seen and unique to these atolls. The monument holds deep cultural significance for Native Hawaiians, with wahi pana (sacred sites) and mea makamae (cultural objects) found on Nihoa and Mokumanamana. The natural and cultural history of Papahānaumokuākea remains deeply connected to Native Hawaiian ancestry and cultural and spiritual practices.

## THE STAKES:

Unwinding protections for Papahānaumokuākea could lead to industrial commercial fishing, pollution and habitat degradation, imperiling both wildlife and rich cultural resources. The expansive, delicate coral reefs, among the world's most endangered ecosystems, provide shelter, food and breeding grounds for a variety of animals. Harming these reefs would ripple through the ecosystem and threaten the rich diversity of marine life, including critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals, who could be driven to extinction.

The cultural heart of Papahānaumokuākea, with its sacred sites and historical landmarks, is equally at risk. For Native Hawaiians, the sacred areas are spiritual and deeply woven into their traditions and lifeways. Without protection there could be profound harm to these culturally significant areas.

Revoking protections for Papahānaumokuākea, or other marine national monuments like Pacific Remote Islands and Rose Atoll, would endanger rich biodiversity and cultural heritage and undermine the efforts to preserve and understand the world's most remarkable marine environments.

### Contact:

Maxx Phillips, Center for Biological Diversity, (808) 284-0007, [mphillips@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:mphillips@biologicaldiversity.org)

Miyoko Sakashita, Center for Biological Diversity, (510) 845-6703, [miyoko@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:miyoko@biologicaldiversity.org)