

**Opposition to the Proposed Expansion of the  
Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM)**  
Information for the Media

**List of Speakers and Attendees of Western Pacific Fishery Management Council (WPRFMC)  
Meeting with the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)**

**Speakers:**

- Paul Dalzell –WPRFMC Senior Scientist/Pelagics Program Coordinator
- Kitty Simonds – WPRFMC Executive Director
- Sean Martin – Hawai’i Longline Association
- Arnold Palacios – Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Secretary of Department of Lands and Natural Resources; WPRFMC Chair
- Claire Poumele – Director of American Samoa Port Authority and WPRFMC Member
- Ed Ebisui –WPRFMC Vice Chair, Attorney, and Small Boat Fisherman
- Svein Fougner – Chair of the Permanent Advisory Committee (PAC) to US Delegation to the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

**Attendees:**

- Eric Kingman – WPRFMC Enforcement/NEPA Coordinator
- Sylvia Spalding – WPRFMC Communications Officer

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**Key Problems**

- The highly migratory marine species that are targeted for protection in the PRIMNM expansion proposal will not realize additional benefits from increasing the size of the existing monument. These species spend too little time in the areas under consideration to see meaningful conservation gains, and the U.S. fisheries operating in the region are already well regulated and sustainably managed.
- The proposed PRIMNM expansion would cause significant economic harm to U.S. fisheries based in the Western Pacific, as well as to the economies of Hawai'i and U.S. Pacific Island territories that are highly reliant on fishing. It will increase the cost and difficulty of fishing in the region by displacing fishermen to more distant waters.
- Numerous environmental groups have argued that on average only 3-5 percent of fish landed comes from the proposed expansion areas. This statistic ignores the highly migratory nature of the fisheries, and the significant fluctuations from year to year in the locations where fishing takes place. In some years, up to 16 percent of the Hawaiian longline catch, and 21 percent of the purse seine catch has been from the Pacific Remote Islands. Fishermen can only fish where there are fish, but cannot always afford the fuel to travel greater distances to locate them. They need access to the areas where the fish might be in any given year, within a reasonable distance.
- The proposal would ban American fishermen from 50 percent of the American Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Pacific, impacting our already nearly \$11 billion seafood trade deficit and increasing our dependence on foreign, imported seafood. 20-30% of seafood consumed in the U.S. is already imported from illegal, unreported, or unregulated (IUU) sources.
- Expanding the PRIMNM won't protect vulnerable marine habitats from rising ocean temperatures and ocean acidification that are the result of climate change. The President's proposal overlooks the major causes of concern for our oceans' sustainability.
- Through unilateral action, the Administration circumvented important input from the management bodies, industry stakeholders, and local officials that are most familiar with the area. Objections and criticisms regarding the proposal from those in the Western Pacific have not been adequately considered in the decision making process.

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**Issue Overview**

**On June 17, 2014, President Obama announced a proposal to expand the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM).**

- The PRIMNM would be expanded from almost 87,000 square miles to nearly 782,000 square miles.
- If implemented, the expansion would include up to the entire 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of several U.S. Pacific Islands and atolls: Wake Island, Howland Island, Baker Island, Jarvis Island, Kingman Reef, Palmyra Atoll, and Johnston Atoll.
- This massive area would be off-limits to commercial fishermen, drastically reducing their ability to sustain their livelihoods and crippling the islands' marine-based economies.
- Without the expansion, 90 percent of the nation's protected marine areas already surround Hawai'i and the U.S. Pacific Remote Islands.

**The President is proposing to designate this Monument expansion under the Antiquities Act, a 1906 law that gives the President the authority to designate National Monuments.**

- Through unilateral action, the Administration circumvented important input from the management bodies, industry stakeholders, and local officials that are most familiar with the area.
- Local governments, the fishing industry, fishery scientists, and the public in these areas strongly oppose the marine monument expansion.

**The object of the President's Monument expansion is to take bold and significant action for ocean health, but America's marine resources are already well managed.**

- The three key environmental targets of the Our Oceans Conference, where the proposal was first announced, were overfishing, marine pollution, and ocean acidification.
- However, John Podesta stated at the same conference that "we've largely ended overfishing in federally managed waters" already. In his video statement at the conference, President Obama also lauded the fishing reforms that have led to the reduction of overfishing.

**The proposed PRIMNM will be nearly impossible to enforce.**

- The United States Coast Guard (USCG) patrols the Pacific Remote Island Area (PRIA) infrequently, estimated at about once per quarter.
- In their absence, U.S. fishing vessels are the eyes and ears of the USCG, self-regulating the American fishing industry and alerting the USCG of illegal foreign fishing.
- U.S. fishing vessels are required to be equipped with vessel monitoring systems, or VMSs. Foreign vessels are not required to employ VMS.

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- Removing American fishermen from their role as sentinels in the area may allow foreign fishermen to enter and fish the waters that Americans are banned from.

**The Monument expansion will not significantly improve on conservation protections that are already in place.**

- The highly migratory marine species (sea turtles, sharks, sea birds, tuna, marine mammals, etc.) that are targeted for protection in the expansion proposal will not realize additional benefits from replacing their current protections with a marine monument.
- Highly migratory species spend little time in the proposed monument area before moving into internationally fishable waters; designating a monument on paper does not isolate an area like an aquarium.
- Climate change is already shifting fish populations. Bigeye tuna populations, for example, are predicted to shift from the western to the eastern Pacific Ocean.

**Currently the waters in question for Monument designation are already highly regulated and sustainably managed.**

- The United States upholds the strictest fishing regulations in the world. American fishermen abide by strict standards regarding catch limits, gear restrictions, bycatch protections, and additional conservation measures.
- However, establishing monuments under the Antiquities Act undermines the Magnuson-Stevens Act, its National Standards, and regional fisheries management process.
- Given that overfishing has largely ended in federally managed waters and these successful practices have been carefully and methodically implemented, erasing them from the area through a monument designation is concerning.

**The proposed PRIMNM expansion would cause significant economic harm to U.S. fisheries based in the Western Pacific, especially the purse seine and Hawaiian longline fisheries.**

- The waters off of the Pacific Remote Islands that are under consideration for inclusion in an expanded PRIMNM are important to both the U.S. purse seine and Hawaiian longline fisheries. Depending on the year, and the influence of El Niño and other cyclical weather patterns, these areas can comprise anywhere from 5-15 percent of total longline fishing effort.
- Tuna fishing is central to the economy of American Samoa, which, in addition to hosting the U.S. purse seine fishery is also home to several tuna canneries, one of the largest source of private sector revenue and jobs in the territory.
- These fisheries are also important to the U.S. overall. They supply 80 percent of the country's domestic supply of bigeye tuna, and 50 percent of its domestic swordfish and yellowfin tuna. Honolulu is the 5th most valuable port in the United States, with \$100 million in landings.

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- Because climate change is likely to change tuna migration patterns, maintaining flexibility for U.S. fisheries by having continued access to the areas under consideration is going to become increasingly important in the future.

**Denying U.S. fishermen access to the waters around the Pacific Remote Islands will make fishing in the western Pacific much more expensive.**

- If U.S. fishermen lose access to American fishing grounds, they will need to increasingly rely on fishing on the high seas or in the territorial waters of other Pacific nations. This will lead to an increased costs not only in things like fuel, but also in the fees paid to other nations to access their fishing grounds.
- The U.S. is currently in the process of renegotiating the South Pacific Tuna Treaty (SPTT), which allows U.S. vessels access to the EEZs of several Pacific nations. Several countries want to increase the fees paid by the U.S. to access these areas, a problem that would be exacerbated with a PRIMNM expansion.

**The proposed PRIMNM expansion introduces serious complications in competing in the global seafood market.**

- The proposal would ban American fishermen from 50 percent of the American EEZ in the Pacific, while other Pacific fishing nations that we directly compete with keep theirs open to fishing.
- An EEZ is a competitive advantage, a zone where a state has sovereignty over the marine resources contained within it.
- The United States suffers from a nearly \$11 billion seafood trade deficit, and 90 percent of seafood consumed in the U.S. is imported.
- Banning U.S. fishermen from nearly 700,000 square miles of U.S. waters is likely to increase American outsource of seafood.
- Seafood demand is strong in the U.S., and if American fishermen cannot meet it, foreign fishermen will.
- Unfortunately, the environmental standards of other Pacific fishing nations' industries fall far short of American standards.
- 20-30% of foreign imported fish consumed in the U.S. is estimated to be from Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- It seems likely that through a monument expansion that means to boost international marine conservation efforts, we will inadvertently support the countries that do not prioritize these types of efforts.