

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
HONOLULU

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

May 27, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to convey my support for the expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM) as proposed by local leaders in Hawai'i and the broader Pacific.

Throughout my tenure as Governor of Hawai'i, I have engaged with stakeholders to understand the most effective ways to ensure a healthy, thriving ocean for our future generations. In 2016, I announced at the IUCN World Conservation Congress Hawai'i's commitment to effectively manage 30 percent of our nearshore waters by 2030. In the same year, I also conveyed my support for the expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

I understand that large-scale marine protected areas are critical to maintaining climate change resilience, protecting biodiversity, and enhancing fisheries. We know that a healthy ocean provides countless benefits to our Earth and people, from the air we breathe to the food we eat.

I believe the proposal to expand the PRIMNM boundaries around Howland and Baker Islands, Palmyra Atoll, and Kingman Reef from 50 nautical miles to 200 nautical miles balances the social and economic needs of today with the future health of our ocean.

Expanding protection around the waters of Howland and Baker Islands, Palmyra Atoll, and Kingman Reef will safeguard areas of open ocean ecosystems that are intricately connected to nearshore and terrestrial ecosystems. Expansion would also protect meaningful habitats for endangered and threatened species, such as sharks and birds, who are traveling well beyond the current boundaries to breed, forage, and rest.

Additionally, the expansion will protect 98 undersea mountains, or seamounts, which serve as ecological hotspots for biodiversity. In the 2014 Presidential Proclamation for the expansion

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of PRIMNM, it states that 15 to 44 percent of the species on a seamount or seamount group are found nowhere else on Earth. Roughly 5 to 10 percent of invertebrates found on each survey of a seamount are new to science. The 98 seamounts that are currently unprotected provide the opportunity for identification and discovery of many species not yet known to humans, with possibilities for research, medicines, and other important uses.

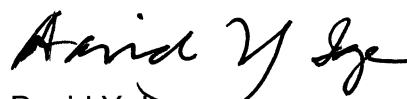
While there is no deep-sea mining currently occurring around the PRIMNM, mining interests have identified these waters as a high value area. Deep-sea mining for increasingly difficult-to-find minerals threatens to accelerate species extinction and the fisheries that depend on healthy ecosystems. Expanding PRIMNM now will ensure that future deep-sea mining will not occur in this wild and biodiverse marine ecosystem.

Mahalo to your administration for your commitment at the 2022 Our Oceans conference to launch a working group or commission to evaluate naming practices for existing and future marine national monuments and national marine sanctuaries, with particular emphasis on the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.

I was fortunate to witness the renaming of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and see the effect it had on the people of Hawai'i. The Northwest Hawaiian Islands have deep cosmological and traditional significance in the Native Hawaiian culture, and the name Papahānaumokuākea helped people to recognize its significance and create a connection with it. Many people now recognize that the area is as an ancestral environment, that it is an embodiment of the Hawaiian concept of kinship between humans and the natural world, and that it is believed to be the place that life originates and to where the spirits return after death. The Pacific Remote Islands deserves a name of equal importance and I urge you to involve Pacific Islanders in the renaming process to ensure that the name chosen has a similarly transformative effect.

Mr. President, mahalo for your consideration of the request to expand and rename the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument. We invite you and members of your administration to visit Hawai'i so that you can solicit input from Native Hawaiian cultural practitioners, scientists, conservationists, commercial and recreational fishers and others interested in the proposal.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Y. Ige". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

David Y. Ige  
Governor, State of Hawai'i