



Proposed Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands

Step 1: Public Comment Period

April 18, 2023 – June 2, 2023



Comments and Preparation of Draft Documents

Summer 2023 – Early Spring 2024



Step 3: Release Draft Designation Documents and Provide for Public Comment Period

Target: Spring 2024



Step 4: Prepare Final Designation Documents

Target: Summer 2024



Step 5: Publish Final Designation Documents

Target: Fall 2024



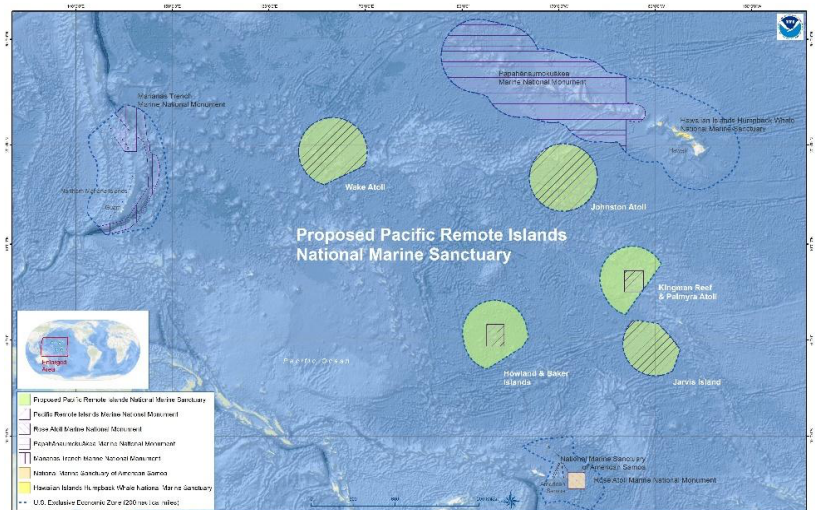
Step 6: Final Decision on Sanctuary Designation

Target: Late Fall / Winter 2024

About the Proposed Designation

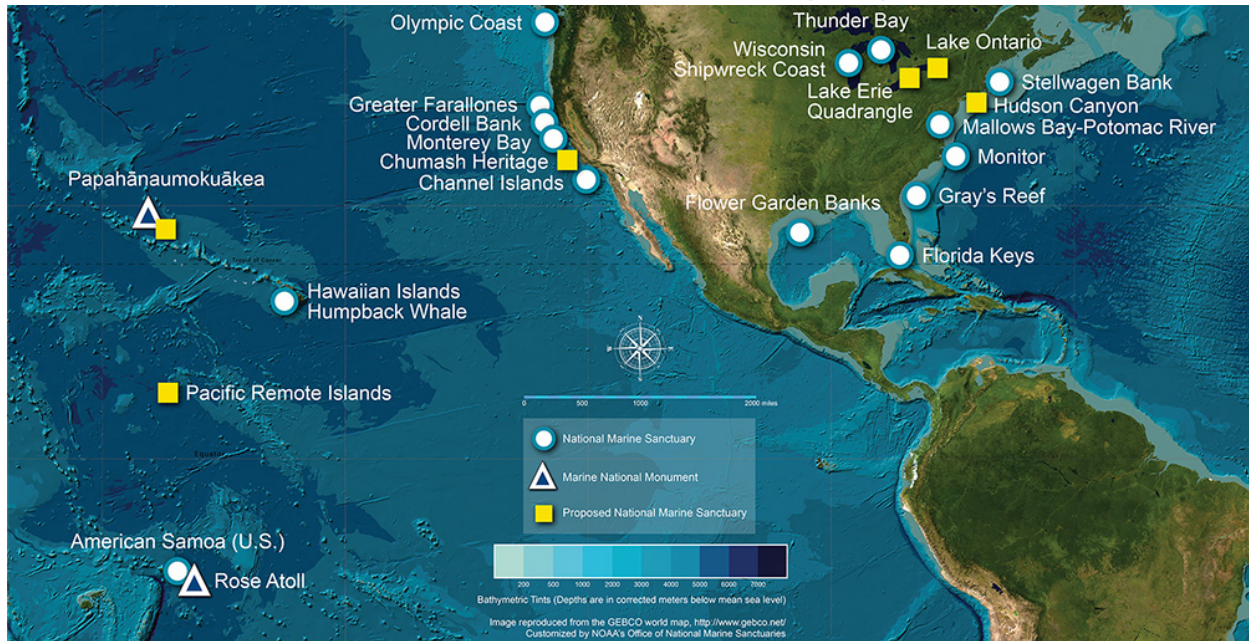
On March 24, 2023, [President Biden](#) directed the Secretary of Commerce to consider initiating the [designation process](#) for a proposed national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands. On April 17, 2023, [NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries](#) issued a Notice of Intent to Conduct Scoping and to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Designation of a National Marine Sanctuary for the Pacific Remote Islands, launching the designation process. The proposed sanctuary designation would allow NOAA to augment the existing protections for the [Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument](#) with additional regulatory and non-regulatory tools, and to conserve additional areas outside the monument's existing boundary. The proposed sanctuary would not include terrestrial areas or diminish the protections of the existing monument.

As a first step in the designation process, NOAA initiated a public comment period to get input on the scope and management considerations related to designating a national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Remote Islands. From April 17 to June 2, NOAA held in-person meetings in Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, had two virtual meetings, and received nearly 57,000 written and oral comments. NOAA continues to consult with federal agencies, territories and stakeholders as it develops draft documents to support the proposed sanctuary designation. NOAA anticipates holding additional public meetings on the draft designation documents in the winter or spring of 2024.



Map displaying the general area under consideration for a new national marine sanctuary. Image: NOAA

National Marine Sanctuary System



Uplifting Historical and Cultural Connections

The proposed sanctuary would honor the ancestral, historical, and cultural connections to the Pacific Remote Islands and the surrounding open-ocean waters, recognize the importance of Indigenous knowledge, language, stories, and cultural connections between lands, waters, and peoples, and celebrate distinct cultures. Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Carolinian, and many other Pacific Island Indigenous peoples have voyaged across this vast expanse of the Central and Western



Branching corals grow on a vibrant shallow coral reef at Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: Jim Maragos/USFWS

Pacific Ocean over thousands of years, interpreting the stars, winds, and currents with great skill and proficiency to settle new areas, engage in trade and commerce, and exchange knowledge and cultures among distant communities.

A Large Natural Laboratory

The region's diverse habitats and pristine reefs provide a haven for a variety of fish, invertebrates, seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals – many found nowhere else in the world – and are an ideal laboratory for monitoring the effects of climate change.



Closeup of rare giant clams at Kingman Reef National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: Amanda Pollock/USFWS

A national marine sanctuary in this area could complement other resource management efforts by raising awareness, supporting research, and guiding coordinated and comprehensive ecosystem-based management.

For questions or additional information, please send inquiries to proposed.primns@noaa.gov.

[Revised October 2023]



Thousands of convict tangs school in the shallows off Jarvis Island. Photo: Courtney Couch/NOAA

