

Dear President Obama,

As you saw from the letter recently signed by nearly 500 scientists, the scientific community strongly supports establishing no-take marine reserves in waters of the United States.

As marine, natural and social scientists, we would like to express our strong support for your proposal to expand the boundaries of Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument to the edges of the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), as is your right under the Antiquities Act of 1906.

The existing protected areas extending 50 miles around the islands were not established using any scientific guidelines. The latest science strongly supports protecting large areas that provide for all major needs of marine species (e.g., protecting both the nesting and feeding areas for seabirds). Highly migratory species such as endangered Pacific leatherback sea turtles traverse this region along with rare species such as beaked whales and melon-headed whales. The near-pristine islands and atolls, seamounts and surrounding waters are among the world's healthiest and most intact ocean ecosystems, and provide stepping stones for species moving across the central Pacific. They are an irreplaceable area of significant scientific interest as a baseline for how intact tropical ecosystems function.

We heartily support your executive action to give permanent, strong protection for biodiversity in the waters surrounding these islands by excluding all commercial fishing and mineral extraction, and any other activities that would degrade the largely intact marine ecosystems in them. Given this history-making opportunity, we strongly recommend extending existing protections throughout the expanded Monument to 200 nautical miles.

We applaud you Mr. President for understanding the importance of expanding the boundaries of Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument to the edges of the US EEZ and giving strong protection to these marine ecosystems. By doing so you demonstrate global leadership and send a strong message to countries around the world that are deciding whether to protect their own marine environments.

We will be pleased to celebrate the historic day when you designate the largest strongly protected place on Earth.

Sincerely,

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