

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Remarks on the Expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument on Midway Atoll

September 1, 2016

Well, let me start by saying that this is hallowed ground. As I said before, the Battle of Midway was a turning point in the battle for the Pacific and World War II. An incredible number of young men lost their lives here protecting our freedom. And for us to be able to visit this monument and remind ourselves of the sailors and airmen and everyone involved who were able to rebuff a Japanese force that vastly outnumbered them is a testament to their courage and their perseverance.

It is also spectacular as an ecosystem. And our ability to not just designate, but build on, this incredible natural beauty, which is home to 7,000 marine species, that sees millions of birds, many of them endangered, sea turtles, the Hawaiian monk seal, black coral—all sorts of species that in many other places we no longer see—for us to be able to extend that 550,000 miles in the way that we've done ensures not only that the Midway Atoll is protected, but that the entire ecosystem will continue to generate the kind of biodiversity. It allows us to study and research and understand our oceans better than we ever have before.

It's also critically important for us to examine the effects that climate change are taking here in the Pacific Ocean, the world's largest body of water. And as I said yesterday, there are countries that now are at risk and may have to move as a consequence of climate change. There are enormous effects on the human presence in the ocean that creatures are having to adapt to and, in some cases, cannot adapt to.

And so for us to be able to protect and preserve this national monument, to extend it and, most importantly, to interact with native Hawaiians and other stakeholders so that the way we protect and manage this facility is consistent with ancient traditions and the best science available, this is going to be a precious resource for generations to come. And it's an example of the kind of visionary conservation measures that, although I'm the one who ultimately signs it, reflects the work of a lot of people and a lot of organizations and a lot of participation.

So we're very, very proud of what they've done. And I look forward to knowing that 20 years from now, 40 years from now, 100 years from now, this is a place where people can still come to and see what a place like this looks like when it's not overcrowded or destroyed by human populations.

All right? Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. at Turtle Beach. In his remarks, he referred to Proclamation 9478, signed August 25, which expanded the existing Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, remarks on expansion on Midway Atoll.

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