



BIG OCEAN

A Network of the World's Large-Scale
Marine Managed Areas

“BIG OCEAN” – A NEW ERA FOR OCEAN PROTECTION *Managers of the World's Largest Marine Protected Areas Meet for the First Time, Establish Network*

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 10, 2010

HONOLULU--In the past two years, five of the largest marine protected areas (MPAs) in the world have been established or announced. These oceanic equivalents of national parks are the foundation of a new global trend for governments and conservation groups to protect vast expanses of sea. These large MPAs pose many unique management challenges and opportunities. Recognizing the need to learn from each other, the leaders of six sites met for the first time at a summit called “Big Ocean – A Network of the World's Large Scale Marine Managed Areas”. The Big Ocean managers network MPAs are areas that approach or exceed 100,000 square miles (250,000 square kilometers) or similar in size to New Zealand or the US state of Colorado.

The inaugural meeting was held in Honolulu on December 6, 2010 at the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Convened by the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (U.S. Northwestern Hawaiian Islands) and the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) in the nation of Kiribati in the central Pacific, the new initiative also brought together site managers from Australia's long established Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Chile's newly authorized Motu Motiro Hiva Marine Park surrounding Salas y Gómez Island east of Easter Island, and the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, the newest US site in the Pacific--five of the top seven largest MPAs in the world. Together they cover more than 800,000 square miles (1.3 million square kilometers) of ocean ecosystems.

“For almost 35 years, the Great Barrier Reef was the only large-scale site, then 10 years ago, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve--now Papahānaumokuākea --was designated, which made two very large MPAs. But in just the last two years PIPA, as well as four other large scale sites have been created and the sites are growing in size and scale; this network is an idea whose time has come,” said ‘Aulani Wilhelm, NOAA Superintendent for Papahānaumokuākea, and developer of the Big Ocean concept.

With large-scale MPAs being relatively new to the scene, and an effective means for ocean conservation, understanding “best practices” for management of such vast tracks of remote ocean remains largely unknown. From primary threats and how to address them, to enforcement, control of invasive species and ocean acidification, the attendees of “Big Ocean” had no shortage of discussion topics and lessons to share.

The Big Ocean meeting's initial objectives were straightforward: create a network to help managers of large scale protected areas be more efficient and effective by sharing practical experience and knowledge with each other; agree on a proposed set of aims and activities for the network; and to develop a shared statement of commitment to the Big Ocean network.

On what the summit meant to him Tukabu Teroroko, the PIPA director stated, "We share many threats and challenges and this is a foundation for working together to find solutions for problems common to us all, such as climate change, marine pollution and illegal fishing."

Susan White, Project Leader of the Marianas Marine National Monument, added, "The value is in getting this group of managers together to communicate lessons learned. While many of our managed areas may be very different, they are each very important in sustaining marine ecosystems. We are all connected."

"By helping to protect our precious ocean ecosystem, large-scale marine protected areas provide benefits to us all. They not only protect nature but provide wider benefits to society, both now and into the future," said Andrew Skeat, General Manager of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Big Ocean managers will remain in communication, launch a website, and help to raise awareness about the relevance of large-scale MPAs to conservation efforts worldwide. The next meeting is tentatively planned to coincide with the 2011 International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC 2).

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PHOTOS available for the Media: www.bigoceanmanagers.org

B-ROLL VIDEO available for the media: N/A

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Note to editors:

Phoenix Islands Protected Area, Kiribati www.phoenixislands.org

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Australia www.gbrmpa.gov.au

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, USA www.papahanaumokuakea.gov

Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, USA www.fws.gov/marianastrenchmarinemonument/index.htm

Motu Motiro Hiva Marine Park, Chile http://www.subpesca.cl/controls/neochannels/neo_ch593/neoch593.aspx