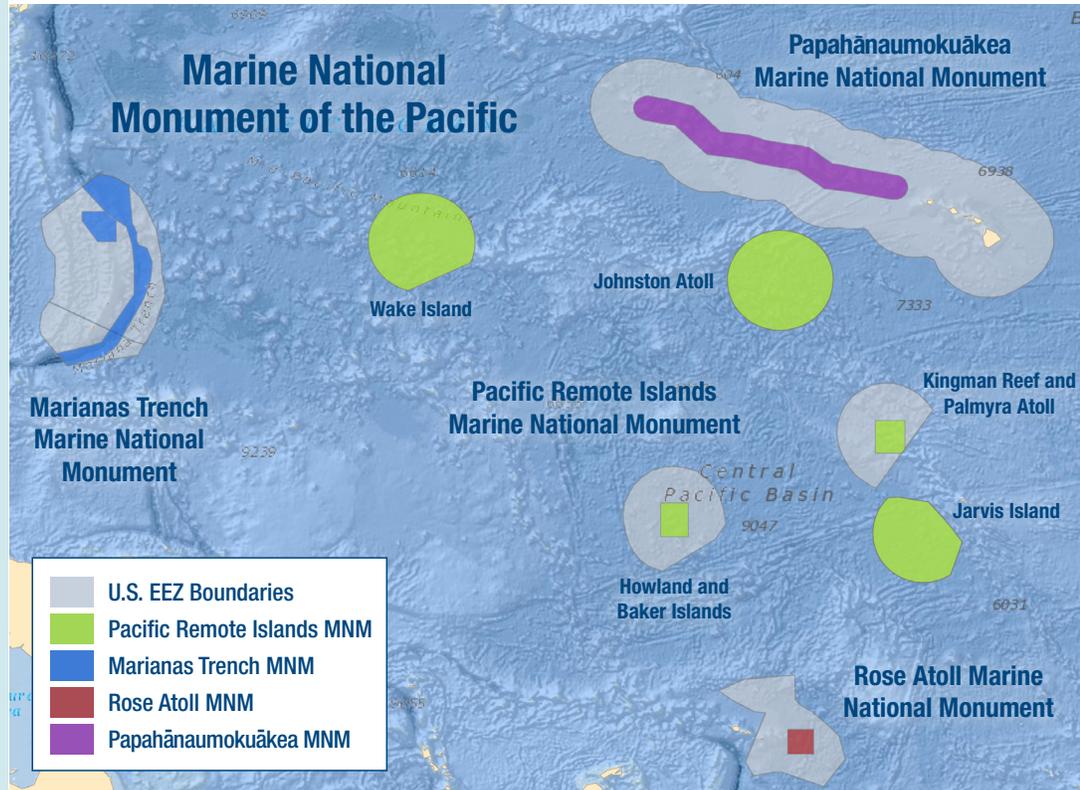




# NOAA FISHERIES

## Pacific Islands Regional Office

# Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument



On January 6, 2009, President George W. Bush established the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument by Presidential [Proclamation 8336](#). The Monument provides broad scale protections to marine ecosystems and incorporated 86,888 square miles within its boundaries, which extend 50 nautical miles (nm) from the mean low water lines of Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands; Johnston, Wake, and Palmyra Atolls; and Kingman Reef.

President Barack Obama expanded the Monument on September 25, 2014 with Presidential [Proclamation 9173](#). The proclamation extended the 50 nm boundary to the 200 mile seaward limit of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone around Jarvis Island and Johnston and Wake Atolls; at approximately 370,000 square nm, the Monument is now the most widespread collection of marine life on the planet under a single country's jurisdiction.

The Monument is cooperatively managed by the Secretary of Commerce ([NOAA](#)) and the Secretary of the Interior ([U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)), with the exception of Wake and Johnston Atolls, which are currently managed by the Department of Defense. National Wildlife Refuges also exist at each of the islands within the Monument, with Howland, Baker, and Jarvis designated as Refuges in 1974; Johnston in 1926; and Kingman and Palmyra in 2001.

These lands, reefs, and waters represent some of the last frontiers and havens for wildlife in the world and comprise a widespread collection of coral reef, seabird, and shorebird protected areas in the Pacific Ocean. However, they're not free from the effects of climate change and invasive species introductions.

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## Johnston Atoll

Johnston Atoll is an ancient atoll that's comprised of Johnston, Sand, North, and East Islands. It's the northernmost point of the Line Islands archipelago. Johnston supports at least 45 coral species, including a thriving table coral community and a dozen species found only in the Hawaiian and northern Line Islands. Large populations of seabirds, sea turtles, whales, and reef sharks are found here as well.



*Spiny squat lobster — seen here perched on a black coral, Umbellapathes, at 1,493 meters depth in the Johnston Atoll Unit of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument — is likely a new (undescribed) species in the anomuran family Chirostylidae. Photo credit: NOAA Okeanos Explorer.*

## Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef

Part of the Line Islands chain, Palmyra Atoll and Kingman Reef are also remnants of volcanoes from some 65–120 million years ago. Kingman is the most undisturbed coral reef within the United States, complete with a greater proportion of apex predators (sharks and jacks) than any other studied coral reef ecosystem in the world. Palmyra Atoll, which consists of about 50 islets and a few lagoons, supports breeding populations of 11 species of seabirds, including one of the largest red-footed booby colonies in the world and the largest black noddy colony in the Central Pacific. Many nationally and internationally threatened, endangered, and depleted species thrive at Palmyra and Kingman, including sea turtles, pearl oysters, giant clams, reef sharks, coconut crabs, fishes, and dolphins.



*Large school of Bumphead parrotfish (*Bolbometapon* sp.) at Wake Island. Photo credit: NOAA.*

## Wake Atoll

Made up of Wake, Wilkes, and Peale Islands, Wake Atoll is the northernmost atoll in the Marshall Islands geological ridge and perhaps the oldest living atoll in the world. In addition to being an active U.S. Air Force airfield, the atoll provides important seabird and migratory shorebird habitat, as well as vibrant coral reefs that support large populations of fishes in the monument waters. More than 300 fish species and 100 coral species thrive on shallow coral reefs, along with giant clams, marine turtles, and spinner dolphins.

## Howland, Baker, and Jarvis Islands

All three of these islands hug the Equator and were formed as fringing reefs around small islands built by volcanoes some 65–120 million years ago. They support grasses adapted to the arid climate at the Equator and host colonies of 15 different breeding seabird species, some with population sizes of international significance. Beyond the shallow fringing reefs and terraces, the slopes of the extinct volcanoes drop off sharply to the



*Sea anemone and clown fish at Kingman Reef. Photo credit: NOAA / Open Boat Films.*

deep floor of the equatorial Pacific Ocean. Here, countercurrents create localized, nutrient-rich upwelling in the shallows near the islands that result in high fish biomasses. These remote and rarely visited reefs are characterized by a large proportion of apex predators in the fish community; giant clams, sharks, and sea turtles are also abundant.

## Looking to the Future

As pristine and beautiful as these islands may be, they're not free of climate change, ocean acidification, and other anthropogenic (human-caused) effects. NOAA and partnering scientists have documented a mass coral bleaching event at Jarvis Island with an estimated 90–95% coral mortality (documented in May 2016). Efforts continue to assess the ecological impacts and recovery of this coral bleaching event, which was associated with the 2014/2015 El Niño event.



*Left: A healthy reef at Jarvis Island in October 2004. Right: Jarvis Island reef in May 2016, after a coral bleaching event. Photo Credits: Jarvis Island National Wildlife Refuge / USFWS.*

NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are working to prepare a Monument management plan that addresses climate change and all threats to the ecosystem and integrates management and conservation of the National Wildlife Refuges located within the Marine National Monument at each of the Pacific Remote Islands.

