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## **NOAA announces two new Habitat Focus Areas to receive targeted conservation efforts**

Today, NOAA announces the selection of two sites in the Pacific Islands region as the next *Habitat Focus Areas* under [NOAA's Habitat Blueprint](#). The Manell-Geus watershed in Guam and West Hawaii (on the Big Island) have been singled out as places where NOAA can maximize habitat conservation investments to benefit to marine resources and coastal communities.

"The Manell-Geus (Southern Guam) and West Hawaii (Island of Hawaii) focus areas both contain valuable habitat that natural resources and communities depend on," says Michael Tosatto, Pacific Islands Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries. "This effort will promote the exchange of ideas and transfer of best management practices between the two sites. NOAA is eager to bring the whole team to the table with our partners to focus on these areas and achieve benefits for these communities and natural resources."

### **Manell-Geus, Guam**

The Manell-Geus watershed—on the southern tip of Guam—contains extensive seagrass beds and coral reefs. These habitats support sea turtles and the local village's strong fishing tradition. However, the reefs are impacted by poor water quality, which is linked to erosion on the steep hillsides and stream banks.

We have conservation projects underway at this site, including efforts to develop and test restoration techniques to stabilize the stream banks and provide erosion control. With this designation as a Habitat Focus Area, NOAA and partners will provide support to implement the conservation action and watershed management plans.

### **West Hawaii**

The leeward—or west—side of the Big Island is known for white sandy beaches and coral reefs that make it a popular tourist destination for snorkeling, diving, and fishing. The beautiful beaches and reefs are also home to endangered or threatened animals including Hawaiian monk seals, humpback whales, and green sea turtles. However, these and many other precious natural resources are threatened by drought, fire, invasive species, and development.

Through NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program, we are already partnering with local communities to conduct regular marine debris clean-ups, invasive species removal efforts, and various coastal community habitat conservation projects. In the future, NOAA will also help with various projects that align with the area's Conservation Action and Watershed Management Plans.

The [Habitat Blueprint](#) is NOAA's strategy to integrate habitat conservation throughout the agency, focus efforts in priority areas, and leverage internal and external collaborations to achieve measurable benefits within key habitats such as rivers, coral reefs, and wetlands. Under the Habitat Blueprint, NOAA selects certain [Habitat Focus Areas](#) to prioritize long-term habitat science and conservation efforts.

The goals for Habitat Focus Areas include:

- Sustainable and abundant fish populations
- Recovered threatened and endangered species
- Protected coastal and marine areas and habitats at risk

- Resilient coastal communities
- Increased coastal/marine tourism, access, and recreation

NOAA's first Habitat Focus Area was [California's Russian River](#) watershed.

Next steps for Hawaii and Guam include developing implementation plans for each area. NOAA will also begin the selection process for the next Habitat Focus Areas in other U.S. regions.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and our other [social media channels](#).