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## **NOAA Fisheries Issues Final Rule to Protect Pacific Marine National Monuments from Illegal Fishing**

WASHINGTON, DC (June 3, 2013) – Today, after a four-year process, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published final fishing regulations for the Marianas Trench, Pacific Remote Islands, and Rose Atoll Marine National Monuments, which were established by President George W. Bush just before he left office in January 2009. Consistent with President Bush’s proclamations, the regulations *prohibit commercial fishing* within the monuments, but allow recreational and non-commercial fishing under certain guidelines. The rule takes effect on July 3, 2013. See: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/06/03/2013-13113/western-pacific-fisheries-fishing-in-the-marianas-trench-pacific-remote-islands-and-rose-atoll>

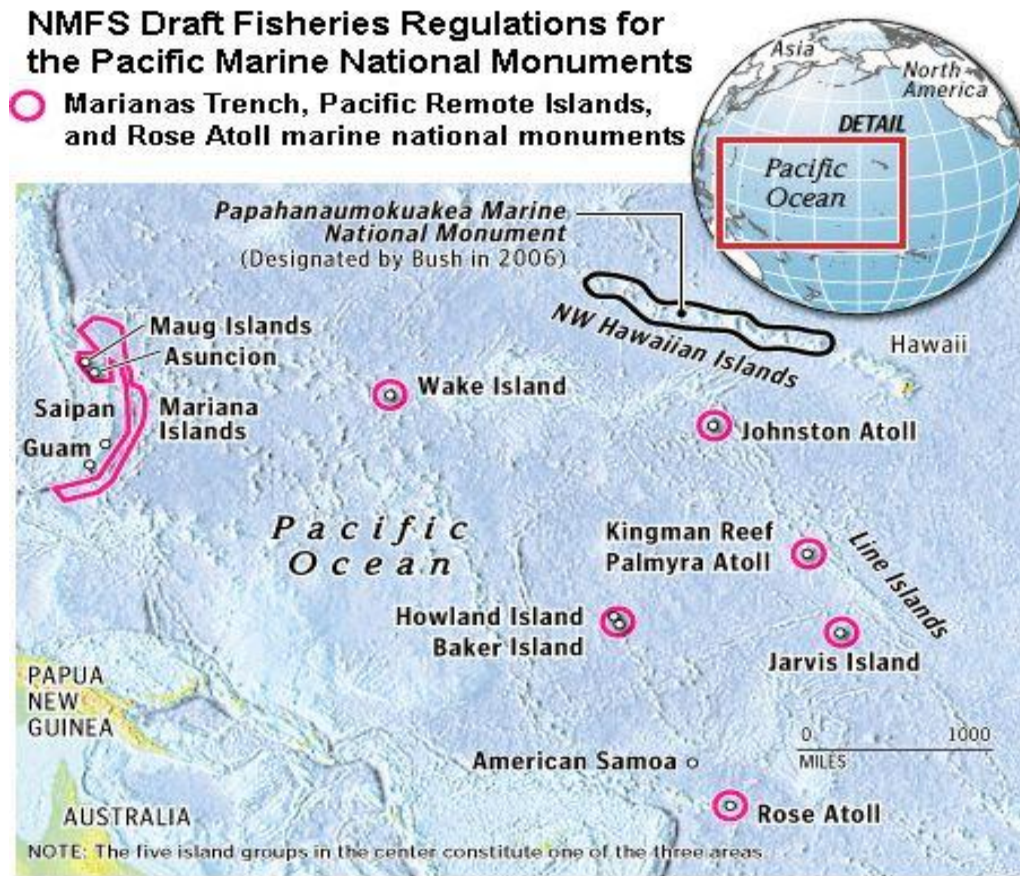
The Pacific marine national monuments span approximately 195,000 square miles of ocean and small coral islands, which provide prime habitat for a diverse array of marine and terrestrial species, including whales, valuable fisheries, and millions of seabirds. Many of the islands within the monuments, such as Rose Atoll in American Samoa and Palmyra Atoll, are units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

“It’s great to see the rule finally issued,” said William Chandler, Conservation Advisor to the Marine Conservation Institute. “These areas are supposed to be safe havens from commercial exploitation, but without codified no-fishing regulations, the government was not able to prosecute illegal fishing that was known or suspected to be occurring.”

The Marine Conservation Institute actively supported the designation of several Pacific marine national monuments, and has been working for four years to have them formally protected from illegal fishing, vessel groundings, and trespass. In February 2012, the Marine Conservation Institute filed a petition for rulemaking to the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of the Interior. The petition requested that NMFS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service promptly issue regulations prohibiting commercial fishing within the Pacific marine national monuments. The petition was never answered, but today’s rule makes the petition moot.

“In addition to the fishing regulations,” said Chandler, “NOAA needs to move quickly to plot monument boundaries on US nautical charts and describe these areas in official navigation guides and other relevant publications. This is the best way to notify and educate mariners that the monuments are legally protected,” continued Chandler. “These simple acts by NOAA will go a long way towards preventing illegal activities and groundings in the monuments.” Chandler noted that the boundaries of US protected areas are customarily delineated on NOAA charts to alert mariners when they are inside legally protected marine areas.

The following map provides a general overview of the location of the marine national monuments in the Western Pacific. [Note: Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument is covered by separate fishing regulations and not included in the new regulations.]



Source: NOAA, modified by the Marine Conservation Institute to highlight areas covered by regulations

### About Marine Conservation Institute

The Marine Conservation Institute is a nonprofit, science-based organization dedicated to saving wild ocean places, for us and future generations.

[www.marine-conservation.org](http://www.marine-conservation.org)

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