

Central Pacific Islands

Protecting America's Most Pristine Coral Reefs

Palmyra Atoll * Kingman Reef * Johnston Island * Jarvis Island
Howland Island * Baker Island * Wake Island * Rose Atoll

Unique Places, Unique Opportunity

The eight U.S. island territories and possessions in the Central Pacific Ocean encompass an area of land and water three times larger than Texas. Almost unimaginably remote – situated beyond the influence of urban centers and major shipping lanes – the Central Pacific Islands include some of the most pristine tropical islands and coral reef ecosystems in the world.

Establishing a National Monument protecting these islands would create the world's largest protected area for:

- **Nearly four times as many shallow-water reef-building coral species as the Florida Keys.**
- **Hundreds of fish species, dozens of seabird species, and an untold number of invertebrate species,** including many found nowhere else.
- **Millions of birds using these areas as critical stopover points, breeding areas and feeding grounds.** These include tropicbirds, boobies, frigatebirds, terns, noddies, petrels, shearwaters and albatross.
- **Large migrating fish, endangered and threatened green and hawksbill sea turtles and marine mammals.**



Coral reef as found on Kingman Reef and Palmyra Atoll. Photo: USFWS

Ensuring Effective, Comprehensive Protection

President Bush is considering a range of options for protecting these areas. Commercial interests – fishing, drilling and others – are likely to advocate multiple use management that permits their own activities. It is essential that the environmental and conservation communities advocate full protection, including:

- ✓ **The 8 Central Pacific Islands should be established as one or several National Monuments,** to include their surrounding Exclusive Economic Zones, which extend **200 nautical miles from shore.**
- ✓ **Sole management by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)** should be affirmed around Palmyra and Kingman to 12 nautical miles, and expanded to 12 nautical miles at the other islands and reefs.
- ✓ **Each island would be designated as a fully protected refuge,** except that limited recreational and sustenance fishing would continue under FWS permits at Palmyra, and the Defense Department would continue to manage the airbase at Wake with FWS managing the waters to 12 nautical miles.
- ✓ **The Secretary of Commerce, acting through NOAA, should manage the waters, seamounts, and seabed** between 12 and 200 nautical miles around all the islands (except Rose) as a fully-protected, no-take zone.
- ✓ **The Secretary of Commerce should establish appropriate enforcement measures** to protect and conserve the wildlife in the waters and on the seafloor surrounding the fully protected refuge, in particular shallow and deepwater corals, large predatory fishes, migratory sea turtles and seabirds.



Red-footed Booby. Photo: Beth Flint