

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands: 100 Years of Presidential Protection



Theodore Roosevelt

1903: In response to U.S. Navy reports of the killing of massive numbers of seabirds at Midway Atoll and complaints about Japanese squatters and poachers, President T. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 199A, placing Midway Atoll under control of the Navy. Roosevelt sent 21 U.S. Marines to stop the slaughter of seabirds for feathers and eggs and to secure Midway as a U.S. possession.

1909: President T. Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 1019 creating the Hawaiian Islands Bird Reservation around islands from Nihoa Island to Kure Atoll, to further protect these islands and their resources.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

1940: President F.D. Roosevelt signed Presidential Proclamation No. 2416 changing the name of the Hawaiian Islands Reservation to the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge and broadening refuge purposes to protect all wildlife.



Lyndon B. Johnson

1967: Under President Johnson, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated French Frigate Shoals, Gardner Pinnacles, Laysan Island, Lisianski Island, Necker Island, Nihoa Island, and Pearl and Hermes Reef and surrounding submerged lands within the Hawaiian Island National Wildlife Refuge as Research Natural Areas.

Ronald Reagan

1988: President Reagan signed legislation designating Midway Atoll as a National Wildlife Refuge to protect and manage its biological and historic resources.



William J. Clinton

1996: President Clinton issued Executive Order No. 13022, transferring full jurisdiction of Midway Atoll and surrounding reefs from the Navy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

2000 and 2001: President Clinton issued Executive Order No. 13158 directing the development of a plan to protect the NWHI coral reef ecosystem, and called for public participation in the design of additional protection measures for the NWHI. As a result of public comments and negotiations between President Clinton and Congress, the 2000 Amendments to the National Marine Sanctuaries Act authorized creation of a NWHI Reserve. President Clinton issued Executive Orders No. 13178 and No. 13196 in December 2000 and January 2001, creating the NWHI Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve.

George W. Bush

2002: President Bush continued the 100-year history of presidential protection for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. His Administration prepared interim management measures designed to protect the Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. NOAA also held a series of public meetings to define an appropriate level of protection for the proposed NWHI sanctuary and disapproved rules allowing harvest of precious corals as inconsistent with the fishing restrictions established by the Executive Orders.

2004: Under President Bush, NOAA released draft goals and objectives for the proposed NWHI sanctuary. NOAA identified the purpose of the proposed sanctuary as the “long-term protection of the marine ecosystems in their natural character.” The Administration’s draft EIS for the proposed NWHI sanctuary is expected to be issued in winter 2005 and a final decision is expected by the President in 2006.



