



Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

DRAFT MANAGEMENT
PLAN OVERVIEW



Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

The Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (Monument) has many unique features and ecosystems, including volcanic islands, underwater volcanoes, and a deep ocean trench. Located in the Mariana Archipelago, the Monument is culturally significant to indigenous Chamorros and Carolinians. The Monument spans approximately 95,216 square miles of submerged lands and waters across three components:

- The **Islands Unit** includes the waters and submerged lands of the three northernmost Mariana Islands — Farallon de Pajaros (also known as Uracus), Maug, and Asuncion. It is the only unit that includes the water column.
- The **Volcanic Unit/Arc of Fire Refuge** includes 21 hydrothermally active seamounts (submarine volcanoes) with a 1 nautical mile radius protected area around each. For management purposes, three of the seamounts are considered part of the Islands Unit.
- The **Trench Unit/Refuge** stretches 940 miles long and 38 miles wide along the seafloor from the northern limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) east of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to the southern limit of the EEZ east of the Territory of Guam.

Monument Management

The “Monument managers” referred to in the Draft Monument Management Plan and Environmental Assessment include the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the CNMI Government. When convened, the Mariana Trench Monument Advisory Council (MTMAC) will provide advice and recommendations on Monument management. Weaving together agency authorities in a complementary manner is critical to achieving long-term protection and conservation of the Monument for the people of the Mariana Islands and the broader public.



*Hydrothermal-vent chimney.
Photo: NOAA*



Healthy coral reef. Photo: NOAA



*Mound of pillow lava.
Photo: NOAA OER*

The Draft Monument Management Plan

1. Provides long-term guidance to achieve Monument goals and objectives, which are derived from the Presidential Proclamation, federal and territorial mandates, and public input.
2. Ensures transparency on management activities and addresses priority management, research, and education needs to foster stewardship of the Monument's natural, historical, and cultural resources.
3. Guides Monument managers to protect and conserve resources, manage environmental threats, and better understand Monument ecosystems.
4. Identifies eleven proposed action plans, which contain a series of management strategies and activities, and captured in four main themes presented in this brochure: Cultural and Maritime Heritage, Exploration and Research, Resource Protection, and Education and Outreach.
5. Includes an environmental assessment to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed action plans.

Your Voice Matters

Public comments about the Draft Monument Management Plan and Environmental Assessment will provide managing agencies with meaningful and important information to develop management strategies and activities for the Monument.

For more information on how to submit your public comments, visit:

NOAA Pacific Marine National Monument Program

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pacific-islands/habitat-conservation/marianas-trench-marine-national-monument>

USFWS National Wildlife Refuge System

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/mariana_trench_marine_national_monument/



Or public comments may be mailed to:

Superintendent
Marianas Trench Marine National Monument
P.O. Box 8134 MOU-3
Dededo, GU 96912

Front cover: Cusk eel. Photo: NOAA; Jellyfish at Enigma Seamount. Photo: NOAA; Branching fire corals in Maug. Photo: NOAA; A scientific diver conducts ocean acidification research at Maug. Photo: Open Boat Films/NOAA

Back cover: Slit shell snail. Photo: NOAA; Small octopus in a field of stalked crinoids. Photo: NOAA OER; Bubble coral, Maug. Photo: Open Boat Films/NOAA; School of bigeye tuna. Photo: NOAA



Traditional voyaging perpetuates traditional knowledge of the vast ocean and connects indigenous people across the Mariana Islands and Micronesia. © Dan Lin

Cultural and Maritime Heritage

Chamorro and Carolinian communities have an extensive cultural connection to the waters encompassing the Monument through traditional navigation, migration, and fishing patterns. The waters surrounding Farallon de Pajaros, Maug, and Asuncion (the Islands Unit) remain culturally significant to the residents of the CNMI and Guam for fishing, subsistence, and customary exchange of marine resources. Access to the Northern Mariana Islands also serves as a way for indigenous communities of the Mariana Islands to maintain connection and practice cultural traditions for generations to come.

The Monument's cultural resources include cultural landscapes, oral histories, chants, and stories of Chamorro and Carolinian culture and traditions. Additional archeological and archival research is needed to determine potential shipwrecks, latte structures, and other physical records of human habitation on the northern Mariana Islands. Engaging with indigenous and local communities provides a deeper understanding of the cultural and maritime heritage of the Monument.

The Cultural and Maritime Heritage Action Plan will guide and inform preservation and protection of the Monument's cultural and historical resources. Monument managers and partners will use the action plan to:

- Collaborate with indigenous and local communities to conduct culturally appropriate research and activities.
- Collaborate with cultural groups and practitioners to incorporate indigenous and local knowledge into Monument management.
- Work with the MTMAC, CNMI and Guam Historic Preservation Officers, and cultural groups to identify, characterize, and inventory cultural, historic, and maritime resources to integrate into resource management efforts.

Exploration and Research

The Mariana Archipelago offers many opportunities for multi-disciplinary scientific research and exploration by local and international researchers. Common activities include using innovative technologies, such as underwater remotely operated vehicles, to study the seafloor; conducting surveys and assessments of Monument marine resources; and exploring the Mariana Trench, the most famous feature of the Monument and the deepest trench on Earth.

Exploration and research will help bring to light the effects of climate change, ocean acidification, sea level rise, and coral bleaching on Monument resources. Research findings will be used to inform management decisions and for conservation planning.

The Exploration and Research Action Plan will guide collaboration with research partners to investigate Monument resources, ecosystems, and processes. Monument managers will share available research findings with local and regional communities, and with international partners through the International Collaboration Action Plan. They will also identify areas to focus their efforts on, including:

- Exchange knowledge with MTMAC to support Monument-related scientific exploration and research.
- Create opportunities for students in the CNMI and Guam to participate in science-related research activities.
- Work with partners to establish long-term study sites at appropriate locations within the Monument to better track and forecast changing climate conditions.

*A hydrothermal vent field was discovered at Chamorro Seamount during a deepwater exploration.
Photo: NOAA/Office of Ocean Exploration and Research*





*Remotely operated vehicles help scientists learn more about the deep-sea life in the Monument.
Photo: NOAA /Office of Ocean Exploration and Research*

Resource Protection

Managing large-scale marine protected areas like the Monument requires innovative approaches and cooperation with conservation partners to ensure the protection, management, and sustainable use of marine resources. Resource protection is essential to protect and recover threatened and endangered species and to preserve the habitats they depend on.

Marine species and habitats face increasing pressure from changing climate conditions, invasive species, marine debris, and commercial fishing. Monitoring efforts will help track the status, condition, and trends of resources and processes. Monitoring will also help protect the ecosystem by ensuring fishing vessels' compliance with regulations and identifying illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.

The Marine Resources Conservation and Monitoring Action Plan will support and coordinate monitoring efforts and integrate information into management decisions. Monument managers will identify and address major threats, while contributing to the protection of the Monument's unique ecosystems through the following activities:

- Assess the need and feasibility of deploying advanced surveillance technologies to aid in resource monitoring and protection.
- Collaborate with partners to provide access for sustainable fishing activities (subsistence, recreational, and traditional indigenous fishing) within the Islands Unit by granting fishing permits only to the residents and businesses of the CNMI and Guam.
- Work with the Marianas Visitors Authority and partners to promote eco-tourism, recreational, and economic ventures that are compatible with conservation and resource protection.

Education and Outreach

Education and outreach activities provide opportunities for residents of the Mariana Islands and people around the world to engage and connect with the Monument. Such activities improve local and global awareness and understanding of the ecological, historical, and cultural significance of the Monument. Although physical access to the Monument is logistically challenging due to its remote location, information about the Monument region will be available and accessible to the residents of the CNMI and Guam and the general public.

The Ocean Literacy, Environmental Education, and Public Outreach Action Plan will create space for management agencies, local partners, and community members to exchange knowledge and open dialogue for collaborative resource management. Monument managers will:

- Work with educators in the CNMI and Guam to develop locally-relevant ocean literacy curriculum and material.
- Create educational opportunities for the public to learn about the Monument's cultural and maritime heritage.
- Continue to provide support and participate in the initiative to establish a Monument visitor contact station.

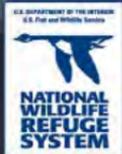
A teacher participating in the "Why Do We Explore" workshop pulls the foghorn inside the NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer. Photo: NOAA





NOAA
FISHERIES

www.fisheries.noaa.gov



www.fws.gov/pacificislands/



FARALLON DE PAJAROS

MAUG

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Islands Unit Photos: A. Magallon/NOAA

MARIANAS TRENCH

Marine National Monument

