

# President Bush Creates World's Largest Marine Protected Area

In one of his last acts as president, on Jan. 6 President George W. Bush [declared Rose Atoll, the Mariana Trench and the Pacific Remote Island Area as U.S. National Marine Monuments](#). This declaration creates the largest marine protected area (MPA) on the planet, covering 195,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean and effectively bans recreational fishing out to 50 nautical miles within the monuments. President Bush made this declaration using unilateral presidential powers provided under the Antiquities Act and bypassing long-standing environmental review and public comment processes.

In the coming months and years the Departments of the Interior and Commerce will determine how, when and if recreational fishing will be allowed to occur in the future.

This declaration was not the first time that President Bush had used the Antiquities Act to create MPAs. In 2006 the president used that act to create the [Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Marine Monument](#). That monument created 140,000 square miles of MPAs that banned all recreational fishing, including catch and release.

Throughout the process of the latest marine monuments, the American Sportfishing Association (ASA) and other members of the sportfishing community met with White House officials in a series of meetings to highlight the conservation, economic and social benefits

of recreational fishing and boating and voice their concerns about using the Antiquities Act to establish MPAs in the Pacific Ocean.

Mike Nussman, ASA president and CEO, said that the entire process took 60 days to complete, and did not allow any public review and comment.

"There was no proposal or scientific information available for public review and comment," said Nussman. "We in the sportfishing community have significant issues with any process where the outcome prohibits people from accessing public resources, particularly when there is no open, transparent process to do so."

While ASA is disappointed in the decision to declare these areas as monuments, ASA is hopeful that President Barack Obama will follow through on promises regarding access and sportfishing that he made on the campaign trail.

President Obama has said that his agenda regarding access to public lands is going to be one that ensures the outdoors is available to the next generation.



"The decision to establish marine reserves should be made as a result of a transparent, science-based process and be the least intrusive possible to get the job done," Obama said on the campaign trail.

ASA will work with the Obama administration to voice its desire to re-establish recreational fishing in the three new marine monuments. ■