Papahānaumokuākea is a Special Place with Rich Marine Heritage, Ecological Value, and Spiritual Meaning

Special places are coastal and marine areas that are culturally significant for a variety of reasons. Designating a place to be a landmark, monument, and/or Marine Protected Area (MPA) can help ensure its existence, provide valuable ecosystem services and preserve cultural heritage and identity.

How Can Special Places Be Protected & Preserved?

Papahānaumokuākea is a Marine National Monument, a 2000 km-long cluster of low-lying islands and atolls located northwest of the main Hawaiian Islands. Named for the Hawaiian creator goddess, Papahanaumoku, and her husband, Wakea, this area has well-preserved temple shrines and a strong ancestral history. It is believed, in local culture, that this is both where life originates and where spirits return to after death.

Sites of Cultural Significance Within Papahānaumokuākea

60+ Submerged Aircraft
60 Shipwrecks

Papahānaumokuākea is One of the Largest Marine Protected Areas in the World

Papahānaumokuākea is protected as an MPA, a National Monument and as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is the single largest U.S. conservation area and one of the largest marine conservation areas in the world; its total area is greater than all U.S. national parks combined.

SOURCES:
Fifth IUCN World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa. 2003. Recommendations
Maritime Heritage Research, Education and Management Plan, Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument
Towards Networks of Marine Protected Areas. The MPA Plan of Action for IUCN’s World Commission on Protected Areas
United Nations World Database on Protected Areas

Only 2% of the Ocean is Designated as an MPA
While 12% of Land Surface is Protected

362,073km²
Total Area of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

6060
+

8,105,430km²
of the Ocean is Protected

335,258,000km²
Total Area of the Ocean

16,263,609km²
of Land is Protected

130,034,681km²
Total Area of Land

SOURCES: