

## HAWAII FISHING NEWS OCTOBER 2008

“Marianas Going... Going.... MPA?”

Written by: Robert Duerr

Texas rancher announces to Pacific Islanders their new ocean conservation regime?

August 25, 2008 Crawford, Texas. President Bush, while on vacation at his Texas cattle ranch, announces that he is considering conserving 115,000 square miles of the Northern Mariana islands, the Line Islands and an atoll in American Samoa. The Line islands includes 8 islands and coral reefs, fishing grounds used by the Hawaii longline fleet. Bush's Cabinet will review the Presidential order and comment in 60 days.

Enviros celebrate. The conservation will likely create a marine monument. Diane Rigas, ocean program director at the Environmental Defense Fund tells the AP wire service: “Today we put the champagne on ice and we will pop it open.”

Pew Charitable Trusts, a 5 billion dollar concern funded by Sun Oil money and the shadow organization behind the monument, begins press releasing Bush's announcement. Hawaii's seceding rights to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) monument is touted by the “think globally, act globally” Pew as a eco bonanza that needs to be mass produced worldwide. August 28, 2008 Kona, Hawaii. The official Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) delegation, composed of conservation professionals, speaks at Kona's U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting.

They plead their case for conservation, science and resource self-determination. To the proposed Mariana Marine Monument, to Pew's lobbying efforts and President Bush's CNMI annexation, they emphatically say “no”.

Like Native American councils losing the great plains and Hawaiian forfeiting the Hawaiian Islands, the Mariana delegation feels that at the very least their conservation sovereignty and 115,000 square miles, one third of its ocean territory, is being eaten by Washington D.C. apex predators.

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is located in Micronesia in the northwestern Pacific Ocean. It lies three quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines. The Mariana island chain extends 1565 miles from Guam almost to Japan. The CNMI has 14 islands in two groups, the northern group and the southern group.

The Mariana Trench, the worlds deepest ocean canyon at 35,810 ft, is nearby and quickly becomes the signature metaphor for the ocean rights land grab. In a December 20, 2007 letter to CNMI Governor Benigno Fitial, Pew Trust advance man

Jay Nelson, based out of Juneau Alaska, says "...there are no Grand Canyon National Parks of the seas. This is a tragedy...the Marianas Trench, is the deepest place on the globe and demonstrably one of the wonders of the natural world."

Pew, who cut its teeth on public policy, opinion polls and media use, wisely uses land centric images like "Grand Canyon" to sell their marine product. The Pew Group understands that American land lubbers have a hard time wrapping their minds around Oceania. Who, what, where is Micronesia, Melanesia, Mariana?

In Hawaii, which has the fewest registered boats of any state and a ocean resource budget to match, the same land branding strategy was used. There they call the NWHI the "rainforests of the sea" when successfully campaigning for the world's biggest 139,797 square mile NWHI monument.

Yet eco salesmen drafting slick media campaigns have not convinced Marianas' conservation officials that their marine ecosystem is an endangered rainforest or a grand canyon or a Texas ranch.

Pew is criticized in Hawaii for stuffing the pro monument opinion polls with their target audience of supporters. Largely, the Pew target audience warms to preserving the global high seas while web surfing. Staring at coral reef screen savers is marine conservation without the inconvenience of being sea sick. In Hawaii over 50,000 pro monument testimonies are generated though Hawaiian citizens are a minority.

"The people we see here are not living on an island. They snorkel. They leave. It's not their life. They don't live on an island. We live on an island. We live in concert with nature. Co-existing. Co-evolving. Partners with nature." Joyner talking about the tourist environmentalists who want to save the world by saving the Marianas.

The Marianas saw brutal combat in the last days WWII. It was to be a strategic staging post for the capitulation bombing of Japan. The northern Mariana island group comprises 10 volcanic islands. Only 4 are inhabited: Agrihan, Anatahan, Alamagan and Pagan. Inaccessible, remote and seldom visited this is where the monument will be. The southern populated group consists of 4 limestone coral islands including Aguijan, Saipan, Rota and Tinian. Tinian is the island where "Fat Man," the world's second atom bomb, was assembled in August 1945 and bon voyaged on the U.S.S Indianapolis for its Nagasaki destiny. The islands have 389 square miles of land and a population of 87,000.

How to just say "no?"

Addressing the Coral Reef Task Force CNMI government officials plead their case. They say "Eghe," in the Carolian tongue, "Ahi" in the Chamorro dialect and in good ole English they repeat, to all who will not listen, "No way, Jorge." They present a short statement of disapproval, the "CNMI Testimony Opposing Proposal to Establish a National Marine Monument in the Mariana Islands."

The testimony's question is simple: "What is there about "no" in three different languages that Monument proponents do not understand and refuse to respect?"

Are the Marianas failing in their environmental stewardship?

The CNMI is one of the first to meet the Micronesian challenge. This is a voluntary Oceania natural resource and conservation incentive to protect 30% of marine habitat and 20% of land area. They have put in place 5 marine protected areas (MPAs). Some have no fish take. and no motors.

"We are an island. What happens on the land effects the ocean. We feel we can not almost conserve enough. We have already exceeded the Micronesian challenge. We are able to demonstrate this." Joyner says.

By Pew acceptance standards the proposed Mariana Monument is a healthy ecosystem. Jay Nelson writes CNMI Governor Fitial: "We are particularly interested in relatively healthy ocean ecosystems...this area is important enough that the residents of the Mariana Islands have already recognized the special nature of the three northern islands and designated them as nature reserves in the Commonwealth constitution."

The Marianas are learning quickly that monument proponents are eco bureaucrats water parading U.S. Federal policy. These bureaucrats may wear "save the planet" buttons but the CNMI delegation sees them for what they are, Washington insiders.

Here they are swimming with sharks, the top of the beltway food chain. The White House. The Cabinet. The Department of Defense. Council of Environmental Quality. NOAA. NOS. Department of Interior. And powerful NGOs like Pew.

"We are not against MPAs. We are against a monument being put on us. If it ain't broke don't fix it. We are an example...Why take it away because you can? We would like to discuss, yes, but take away what we have shepherded, take away for expediency?" Joyner explains.

In Hawaii the NWHI conservation regime change took 6 years of unresolved meetings, press battles and name calling. Then Bush finds a simpler way: designation of monument status by executive order. With executive order conservation, science and public process is dead. In the Marianas eco bureaucrats smell blood and they circle.

Repeatedly the CNMI delegation talks about their David versus Goliath struggle for their water world homeland. They baffle at how to combat a slick Pew media campaign soft selling a fast tract White House eco takeover.

Fast track it is as Joyner explains: "We had less than a day. A matter of hours to comment. And then came a copy of what came on the wire service on the announcement of the monument...."

Joyner says it was bombs away assault from the beginning, the fall of 2007, when Pew opens a lobby office in Saipan. "We're gonna put a monument up...This is

good for you... This is what's needed...This is best for you and the world...Even when we ask if there is room to discuss we get... 'Here's the information you need. Now hear this.'

Somehow the feeling arises that the Mariana Monument is not about public dialogue and saving nature. Why are some ecosystems invited to the prom while others sit at home? Pew is privy to monument talks while CNMI is left out of stakeholder discussion. Welcome to global real eco politique. Why was Rwanda left to implode while Iraq was set on explode? Why does the White House make a stretch of Mariana water a priority?

ABC News chief congressional analyst, Cokie Roberts, vocalized on National Public Radio how power brokers view Pacific islands. When presidential candidate Obama's family was vacationing to his former island home, she characterized Hawaii as "a somewhat odd place to be doing it." Roberts on ABC's This Week, also stated that Obama's Hawaii trip "has the look of him going off to some sort of foreign, exotic place." American or not islands, for Cokie like many serious politicians, are kookie.

Let it be clear, a trip to the Mariana islands for Washington ecos is traditionally either an exile sentence or a junket, a bone thrown by beltway zookeepers to reward pencil pushing. Here the pencil pushing is a marine real estate deal as big as Texas.

What is the Marianas love affair really about? The Mariana Marine Monument will be the second largest marine protected area (MPA) in the world. Certainly, like any good bureau, the eco bureaus love mandate expansion, jurisdiction enlargement and entitlement engorging. Like sharks tearing on a whale carcass the blubber bits dropping from the Marine Monument money machine will feed a plethora of political deep sea denizens forever.

Joshua S. Reichert, managing director of the Pew Environment Group, cites the monumental success that Pew had establishing the Northwest Hawaiian Islands monument. Pew has been lobbying hard for a national Mariana Marine Monument. Reichert says this "would be one of the most significant environmental achievements" of any president.

In the 1970's the Mariana Islands decided not to seek independence. Instead they merged with the U.S. as a commonwealth similar to Puerto Rico. In 1978 they formed a government and drafted a constitution. As an independent commonwealth they have the right to negotiate foreign treaties and self-rule. With self-rule they have the right to set conservation policy.

Joyner talks about the total disregard for the rights of self determination by the CNMI: "Thank-you, we're not interested. When we tell you we don't want you in our house...leave. They said we're not leaving. We're evicting you. Oh brother why are you treating us this way. We don't know the tactics."

The problem isn't tactics. It's understanding the game. With billions of dollars, Pew Trusts fund the Pew Research Center, the third-largest think tank in Washington DC, after the Brookings Institution and the Center for American Progress.

This is the "big" and the pitches are curveball, fastball and at your head hardball. Bush's executive prerogative to name a marine monument bypassing all input from the main stakeholders is the dust off pitch to the head move. The CNMI delegation are learning under fire and refuse to dive in the dirt.

In the lobby of the Keahou Sheraton Hotel the host of the Coral Reef Task Force meeting, Dan Basta, the Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Ocean Service, walks up to CNMI officials talking like the ecosystem's Dr. Strangelove:

"This is about the bigger picture, the bigger idea for the bigger view... This is a touchstone to Asia. This is about hearts and minds. This is about 750,000 tourists who are going to come. This is not how we prefer to work. We'll try and pick up the pieces. The Pacific time is arriving. To the man in the trenches keep on your flak vest. Gentlemen."

Joyner talks about the Marianas: "We are not separate from the resources. We are one. Its not us and them. It is not a verbalized philosophy. Actualized life. The rest of the world is looking for that connection. We live that. These people come out and see our pristine world and say we've got to preserve this. Preservation and conservation are our future. The monument area isn't separate from nature. We are that nature."

September 11, 2008 Saipan Mariana Islands. The Associated Press reports that the Mariana House of Representatives voted to approve a resolution calling on Bush to drop the proposal to designate the waters around the 3 uninhabited islands Maug, Asuncion and Uracas a monument. Supports of the resolutions say the Commonwealth stands to lose access to a 200 mile exclusive economic zone surrounding the islands."

In a separate news item the Navajo Nation is seeking full control over the Canyon de Chelly national monument from the U.S. federal government. The 131 square mile monument, of natural beauty and 2000 year old ancient Native dwelling sites, was established in 1931. Arvin Trujillo, director of the tribe's Division of Natural Resources says, "we're becoming better equipped to take over some of these monuments."

One day Hawaii will again control the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Why? Those who don't know oceans, say. Those who know oceans, don't say.

