



# Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

*Planning Update Number 1, May 2011*



*Soft corals and tropical fish at the summit of East Diamante / NOAA*

## Charting a Course for the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

Greetings! On January 6, 2009, President George W. Bush established the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (MNM) with Presidential Proclamation 8335. The Monument consists of three units; the Islands Unit encompasses the waters and submerged lands of the three northernmost Mariana Islands (Farallon de Pajaros, Maug, and Asuncion) from the mean low water line out approximately 50 nautical miles (nmi); the Volcanic Unit, encompasses 21 designated volcanic features and the surrounding submerged lands out to 1 nmi radius; and the Trench Unit, encompasses the submerged lands within the Mariana Trench.

No waters are included in the Volcanic and Trench Units, and Government of the Commonwealth

of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) maintains all authority for managing the three islands within the Islands Unit above the mean low water line. The Monument encompasses approximately 61 million acres of submerged lands and certain waters of the Mariana Archipelago.

The Secretary of the Interior has lead responsibility for management of the Monument, in cooperation with the Secretary of Commerce who has primary responsibility for management of fishery-related activities.

To carry out his responsibilities, the Secretary of the Interior delegated management of the monument to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and directed the Service to manage the

Volcanic Unit and the Trench Unit as units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Marianas Arc of Fire National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and the Marianas Trench NWR, respectively.

The Service and NOAA are beginning development of the Monument Management Plan (MMP) working cooperatively under the Service's lead in this process. Over the coming year, we will be seeking input from the public, interested agencies, and organizations regarding concerns, interests, and viewpoints about monument management issues.

Opportunities for public input will be announced throughout the planning process. We may hold public meetings to help share information and obtain comments.

## The MMP Planning Process

The MMP will satisfy the Comprehensive Conservation Plan requirements for the two refuges and NOAA requirements for fishery-related regulations.

The plan will outline a vision, goals, objectives, and management strategies for the Marianas Trench MNM. It will be accompanied by an Environmental Assessment describing the alternatives considered and their environmental effects. The MMP will be reviewed annually, updated when needed, and revised every 15 years.

Presidential Proclamation 8335 requires the establishment of a Mariana Monument Advisory Council to provide advice and recommendations on the development of management plans and management of the monument. The Council is to include three officials of the CNMI government and one representative each from the Department of Defense and the U.S. Coast Guard.

## Monument Overview

### *Mariana Arc of Fire NWR*

The Mariana Arc of Fire NWR is located in the Western Pacific along the Mariana Ridge. The refuge includes 21 submerged volcanic features and their surrounding submerged lands within a circle with a 1 nmi radius. All of these features are within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding the Mariana Islands.

This refuge supports unusual life forms in some of the harshest conditions imaginable. In areas of

this refuge, chemosynthetic and photosynthetic organisms co-exist side-by-side, creating unique biological hotspots of diversity. Here species also survive in the midst of hydrothermal vents that produce highly acidic and boiling chemical soup. The temperature around the vents can reach up to 572° F.

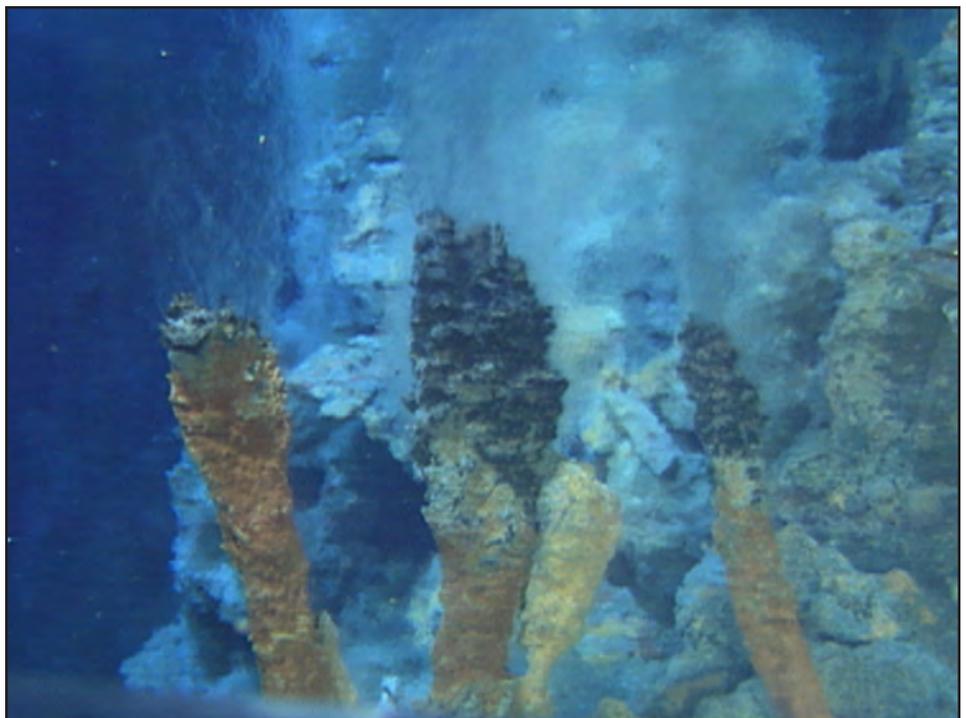
### *Mariana Trench NWR*

The crescent-shaped Mariana Trench, stretching approximately 940 nautical miles long and 38 nautical miles wide, extends from the northern limit of the U.S. EEZ in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to the southern limit of the U.S. EEZ in Guam. The Mariana Trench is where the Pacific Plate plunges beneath the Philippine Sea Plate and into the Earth's mantle. It contains some of the deepest known points in the global ocean. Due to its inaccessibility, the

region is virtually unexplored, and much remains to be learned about its ecological and biological characteristics.

### *Islands Unit of the Marianas Trench MNM*

The Islands Unit includes only the waters and submerged lands of the three northernmost Mariana Islands, Farallon de Pajaros, Maug, and Asuncion, below the mean low water line. Unique reef habitats support marine communities dependent on basalt rock foundations. These reefs and waters are among the most biologically diverse in the Western Pacific and include the greatest diversity of seamount and hydrothermal vent life yet discovered. They also contain one of the most diverse collections of stony corals, including more than 300 species, higher than any other U.S. reef area.



*Black smokers at the Black Forest site at East Diamante Volcano, part of the Volcanic Unit / NOAA*

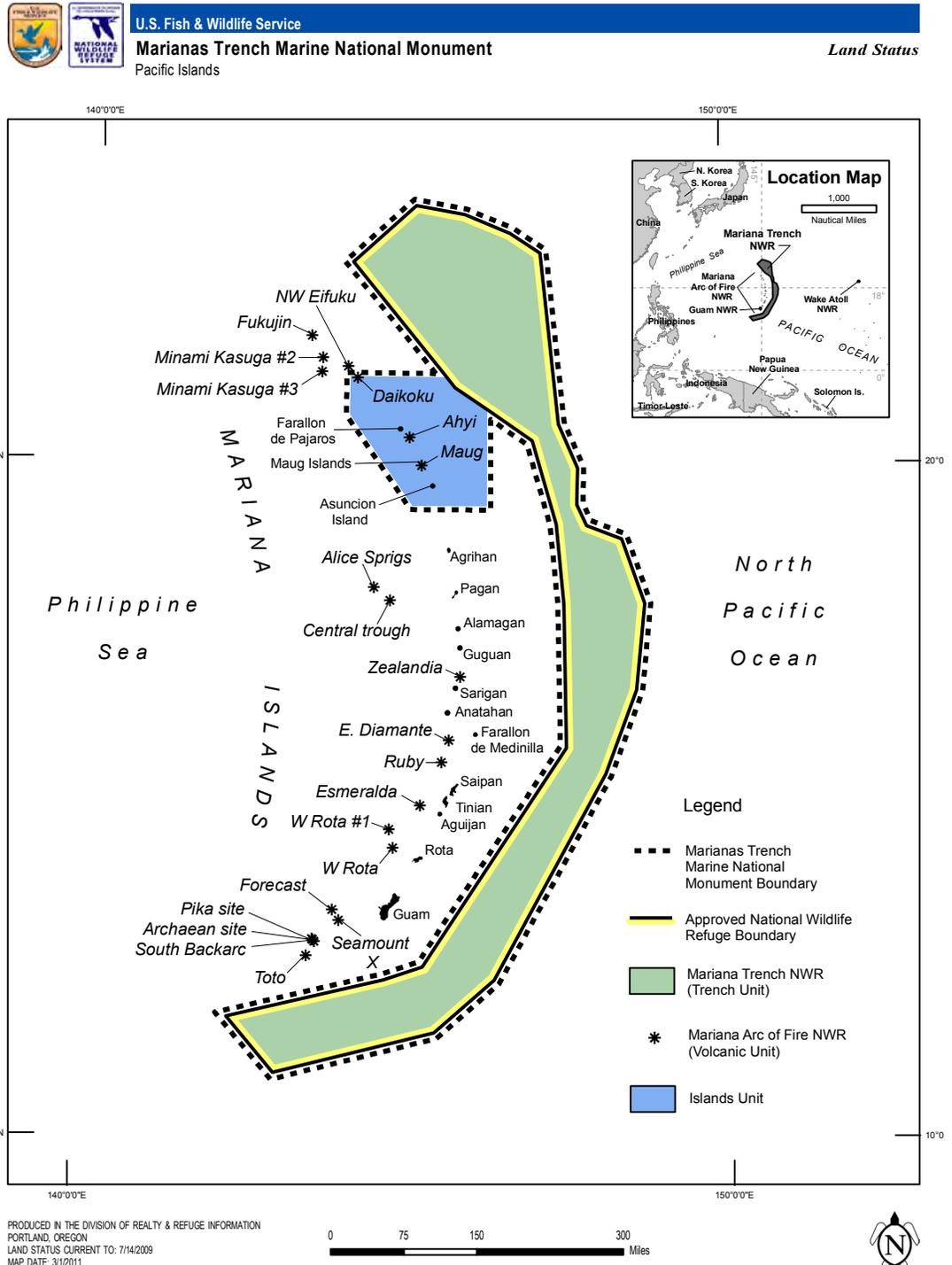
## Preliminary Issues

We have identified the following preliminary issues and activities that we may address in the MMP:

- Management of the Islands Unit, in consultation with the Government of the CNMI, including designating specific roles and responsibilities.
- Public education programs and public outreach regarding the Monument's coral reef ecosystem, related marine resources and species, and conservation efforts.
- Traditional access to the Monument by indigenous persons for culturally significant subsistence, and other cultural and religious uses.
- A program to assess and promote Monument-related scientific exploration and research, tourism, and recreational and economic activities and opportunities in the CNMI.
- Programs for monitoring and enforcement necessary to ensure

that scientific exploration and research, tourism, and recreational and commercial activities do not degrade the Monument's coral reef ecosystem or diminish the Monument's natural character.

In the coming months we will be posting a schedule of comment opportunities on our websites. Comments received during our initial and subsequent scoping opportunities will be reported in future planning updates.



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If you would like to be added to or removed from the Monument Management Plan mailing list, or if you prefer to receive future updates via electronic mail or hard copy, please contact us at (808) 944-2223 with your full name and address.

Help us identify the scope of issues to be considered during the early planning phase by sending your comments to:

E-mail: [MTMNM@noaa.gov](mailto:MTMNM@noaa.gov), include "Marianas Trench MNM" in the subject line of the message.

U.S. Mail: Heidi Hirsh, National Resource Management Specialist, NOAA, NMFS, 1601 Kapiolani Blvd., #1110, Honolulu, HI 96814.

Additional information about the Monument is available on our websites:  
<http://www.fws.gov/marianastrenchmarinemonument>  
[http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/MNM/mnm\\_index.html](http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/MNM/mnm_index.html)