



# Marianas Trench Marine National Monument

*Planning Update Number 3, March 2013*



*Spectacular bubble coral in the Islands Unit. Paula Ayotte/NOAA*

## Thank You for Participating!

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are preparing a Monument Management Plan (MMP) and Environmental Assessment for the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (Monument).

The MMP will guide Monument management for a period of 15 years. As part of the MMP planning process, we held public scoping meetings on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Guam in February and March (2012) to receive public input on management issues, concerns, and opportunities.

In this planning update we have summarized the comments and questions we received and provided an initial response. The full text of all comments received can be viewed on-line at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Your contributions were very helpful in developing preliminary goals for the MMP and will be considered as we draft management objectives and alternatives. Planning Update 4 will introduce the preliminary goals, objectives, and alternatives

for the MMP and open the next public comment period.

We would like to thank everyone who provided comments and we invite you to continue sharing your concerns, ideas, and suggestions with us. Your participation continues to be critical to the success of this planning effort.

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### *What is a National Monument?*

*A National Monument is a protected area that can be created by the President under the Antiquities Act, has historic or scientific value, and is established to protect its uniqueness for present and future generations. The Marianas Trench Marine National Monument is preserved for its unique coral ecosystems, abundant fish populations, and a diversity of seamount and hydrothermal vent life.*



*Persian carpet worm observed at Asuncion. Paula Ayotte/NOAA*

## Monument Advisory Council Convenes in Garapan

Presidential Proclamation 8335 requires the establishment of a Monument Advisory Council to provide advice and recommendations on the development of the MMP. At a minimum, the Council is to include three officials of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI) government and one representative each from the Department of Defense and the U.S. Coast Guard.

The inaugural meeting of the Marianas Trench Monument Advisory Council (MTMAC) was held on June 5-6, 2012, in Garapan, Saipan. The MTMAC voted Mr. Benigno M. Sablan as its chairman, Dr. John Joyner as vice chairman, and Mr. Roy Tsutsui as the secretary. At that time, Mr. Sablan was a Special Advisor to CNMI Governor Fitial and Dr. Joyner was the Senior Policy Advisor to CNMI Governor Fitial. Mr. Tsutsui is the U.S. Navy Defense Coordinating Officer.

The other council members include Mr. Arnold Palacios, Secretary of the CNMI Department of Land and Natural Resources and Commander Morgan Roper, U.S. Coast Guard.

During the meeting, the MTMAC adopted interim procedures to govern its activities, heard operational reports from the Service and NOAA, and developed an action-item list to facilitate recommendations for management planning. Susan White, Monuments Superintendent, and Barry Stieglitz, Refuge Supervisor, represented the Service at the meeting. Lisa Croft, Deputy Regional Administrator, and Heidi Hirsh, Marine Monuments Program Specialist, represented NOAA.

The public had opportunity to provide comments at the end of the session each day.

*MTMAC members and agency staff. Front row, from left: Dr. John Joyner, Arnold Palacios, Susan White, Ben Sablan, Lisa Croft, and CDR Morgan Roper. Back row, from left: Heidi Hirsh, Roy Tsutsui, and Barry Stieglitz*



## Summary of Public Scoping Comments/Questions/Responses

February-March 2012

Topic	Public Comments	Public Questions	Response
Visitor Center	<p>Provide multiple visitor centers (VC) on multiple islands (Saipan, Rota, Tinian) as well as a traveling display.</p> <p>A research facility and lab should be part of the VC.</p> <p>VC should have video and audio feed from Trench.</p> <p>Include long-term maintenance funding for visitor center.</p>	<p><i>Where will the visitor's center be located?</i></p> <p><i>On what basis will the site location of a VC be determined?</i></p> <p><i>What types of exhibits will be in the VC?</i></p>	<p>When necessary funding is secured, and in consultation with the CNMI government, several site locations will be evaluated as part of a Request for Proposals (RFP) which will also include preliminary design options.</p> <p>Site selection factors will include, but are not limited to: accessibility, physiography, demographic patterns, site capacity, zoning, legal matters, utilities availability, and cost.</p> <p>Exhibits will be developed during the design phase to explain Monument resources, ocean and wildlife conservation, cultural and traditional customs, and current research activities.</p>
Education and Outreach	<p>Link programs to CNMI and Guam education curriculums.</p> <p>Provide access to live Web views.</p> <p>Make a 3-D model of islands and trench.</p> <p>Have a summer camp for kids.</p> <p>Develop educational DVD for students.</p> <p>Provide trips to MTMNM for students and teachers.</p> <p>Students should be able to take samples.</p> <p>Establish apprenticeships for CNMI youth.</p>	<p><i>Will there be an on-line map and information to learn more about the Monument?</i></p> <p><i>What educational benefits will there be for our descendants?</i></p> <p><i>How can local people get to visit the Monument?</i></p>	<p>On-line maps and information about the Monument is available on our Websites:  <a href="http://www.fws.gov/marianastrenchmarinemonument">www.fws.gov/marianastrenchmarinemonument</a>  <a href="http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/MNM/mnm_index.html">www.fpir.noaa.gov/MNM/mnm_index.html</a></p> <p>Public education programs and public outreach regarding Monument resources and Monument-related scientific exploration and research will be important management components of value to all.</p> <p>Currently, local residents of the CNMI or Guam would need to have a boat or charter one as well as obtain a Monument activity permit. The permit process will be established for the Islands Unit as part of the MMP.</p>
Economic Benefits	<p>Clarify what is authorized for economic and financial activities authorized within the Monument.</p> <p>Create employment opportunities for CNMI and purchase goods locally, be sure Tinian and Rota are included in economic benefits.</p> <p>Restricting tourism in the Northern islands would be detrimental.</p> <p>Establish buoys for dive boats in near shore reef area as well as deeper water for larger live-aboard boats.</p>	<p><i>How does designating the area as a Monument benefit the people of the CNMI and our descendants?</i></p> <p><i>Who determines qualification on education level and who will be deciding who will be employed by these activities?</i></p>	<p>The benefit to the people of the CNMI may be realized through global recognition of the value and importance of this area for marine ecosystem conservation and also through the opportunity to learn more about the unique resources within the Mariana Archipelago to ensure the long-term conservation of these natural and cultural legacies.</p> <p>If hired as Federal employees, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management publishes minimum qualifications for white collar jobs in the Federal service in the Operating Manual: Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions. For trades, craft, and labor positions, refer to The Job Qualifications System for Trades and Labor Occupations. Human Resource specialists use these manuals to evaluate applicants for vacant positions in the Federal service. The use of contracted employees may also be considered.</p> <p>Qualifications and selection for potential employment opportunities on private charter boats would be determined by those private businesses.</p>

Topic	Public Comments	Public Questions	Response
Science and Exploration	<p>Keep it pristine and untouched.</p> <p>Design lab for deep-sea geological research.</p> <p>Conduct periodic biological surveys.</p> <p>Science lab should be built on one of the 3 Northern Islands.</p> <p>Share all scientific findings with the public.</p> <p>Translate scientific findings into language that can be understood by the general community.</p> <p>While in port, researchers should give presentations throughout the community.</p> <p>Make a world class ocean institute/research facility.</p> <p>Provide resources to fund marine science.</p> <p>Climate change should be considered in the plan.</p>	<p><i>How much science is needed?</i></p> <p><i>What research will be allowed within the Monument?</i></p> <p><i>Has there been an inventory of all the resources on the ocean floor?</i></p> <p><i>Have the resources within the Monument been identified?</i></p> <p><i>Will there be opportunities for teachers and students of the CNMI to participate in the research cruises?</i></p> <p><i>What agency will take care of Rapid Ecological Assessments (REA)?</i></p> <p><i>What has the Hawai'i model taught us so far that we can adopt?</i></p>	<p>The types of research are predicted to revolve around fundamental exploration and characterization; discovering, characterizing, and understanding bottom-dwelling life; discovering, characterizing, and understanding geologic features and habitats; as well as characterizing and understanding scientific processes.</p> <p>Many of the Monument resources in and around the Islands Unit have been identified through the NOAA NMFS Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center (PIFSC). The PIFSC with CNMI, Guam, the Service, and other NOAA and Interior partners is creating a science plan for the Mariana Archipelago under a separate planning process. It will highlight what is known, some things that are unknown, and necessary steps to fill the gaps. In 2006, NOAA explored the Ring of Fire and identified new findings about the biology, vents and volcanism.</p> <p>The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has a long history of data collection and analysis from Pacific islands Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Nonrenewable marine mineral resources within the EEZ of the CNMI are identified in USGS Circular 1286 (2005).</p> <p>Currently the NOAA research cruises to the CNMI are typically filled to capacity with scientists and tasks to be accomplished, so student participation is unlikely. However, teachers can apply to the Teacher at Sea Program. More information is available at: <a href="http://www.teacheratsea.noaa.gov">www.teacheratsea.noaa.gov</a>.</p> <p>Similar to a REA, NOAA will conduct a baseline characterization of the marine resources within the MTMNM and associated archipelago in collaboration with the Service and the CNMI government.</p> <p>The Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument model has taught us the importance of inter-agency and public communication and the benefit of identifying mutual objectives in accomplishing goals.</p>
Traditional and Cultural Access	<p>No permit requirements to enter the islands unit for traditional and cultural fishing.</p> <p>Monument must be open to indigenous residents to visit without hassle.</p> <p>Traditional fishing should mean with traditional wooden boats (no engines) and shell hooks using line from plant or animal parts.</p> <p>Chamorros and Carolinians should fish for free.</p>	<p><i>Will the native islanders and people of CNMI be able to fish in Monument waters after designation?</i></p> <p><i>Will a permit be required?</i></p> <p><i>Will charter fishing be allowed in the Monument?</i></p> <p><i>Will traditional fishing and cultural exchange of fish caught be allowed?</i></p>	<p>Access to the Islands Unit for traditional and cultural purposes will be managed through a permit system in close coordination with the CNMI government.</p> <p>The Proclamation prohibits commercial fishing within 50 nmi of the waters around the islands of Maug, Faralon De Pajaros, and Asuncion. The Western Pacific Fisheries Management Council has proposed non-commercial fishing regulations for the Islands Unit which include options for traditional and subsistence fishing (along with the concept of "customary exchange") and sport/charter boat fishing, with the final regulations to be established by NMFS.</p>

## Summary of Public Scoping Comments/Questions/Responses

February-March 2012

Topic	Public Comments	Public Questions	Response
Regulations and Law Enforcement	<p>Law enforcement (LE) should be done by Federal government and a strong effective LE plan should be in the MMP.</p> <p>Publish new regulation proposals in local media for residents to comment.</p> <p>Regulations should be built by people of CNMI.</p> <p>Consider visitor contact station on Pagan for LE.</p> <p>Vessels entering the Islands Unit need quarantine inspections to prevent invasive species transport.</p>	<p><i>Who will enforce the regulations established for the Monument?</i></p> <p><i>How will regulations for the Monument be enforced?</i></p> <p><i>How will this all be monitored?</i></p> <p><i>How can Guam LE help in enforcing the regulations established for the Monument?</i></p> <p><i>Who is allowed to commercially fish in the Trench area?</i></p>	<p>Monument regulation enforcement will be conducted primarily by the United States Coast Guard (USCG), working in close association with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), Service OLE, Refuge LE, and CNMI LE personnel.</p> <p>USCG response is based on current intelligence information received from CNMI and others. USCG also uses modern technology such as satellite imagery and vessel monitoring systems.</p> <p>Guam LE can help with enforcement through outreach and education to the boating public, boarding at sea and at port of vessels that are known to be operating in the Trench region.</p> <p>Commercial fishing permit holders are listed on the website: <a href="http://www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_permits_index.html">www.fpir.noaa.gov/SFD/SFD_permits_index.html</a></p> <p>An Invasive Species Action Plan will be an appendix to the MMP detailing protocols and prevention measures.</p>
National Security	<p>Federal Government should build USCG bases on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, Pagan, and FDM.</p> <p>Concern that DOD participation on MTMAC will change MMP to allow destructive practices.</p>	<p><i>Will the military be using any areas of the Monument for military exercises?</i></p> <p><i>What area is the military bombing and is it part of the Monument and does it affect the Monument resources??</i></p> <p><i>Why are the Feds (military, Service, &amp; NOAA) not talking about military activities that may impact the Monument?</i></p>	<p>The Proclamation recognizes the important role of the Department of Defense (DOD) and provides specific provisions for their continuing activities. The DOD will continue to conduct exercises in the region to maintain military readiness and has committed to adopt appropriate measures to minimize impacts on natural resources within the Monument. The 2009 Mariana Islands Range Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addresses ongoing and proposed military training activities within the Mariana Islands Range Complex, which includes portions of the Monument. After analysis, the EIS projects "no significant harm to marine communities" within the Monument.</p> <p>The Farallon de Medinilla (FDM) Target Range (70 miles north of Saipan) is not within the Monument. An interagency team of NOAA, Service, CNMI, and U.S. Navy staff survey the area annually to assess damage to coral reef habitat to develop reports with recommendations to minimize damage to coral reef resources, marine mammals, and seabirds using FDM and surrounding waters.</p> <p>The Proclamation mandates that DOD is a member of the Marianas Trench Monument Advisory Council (MTMAC) which will help to facilitate inter-agency communication and enhance public awareness.</p>
MTMAC	<p>Include Guam representation in MTMAC.</p> <p>Not happy with 3 CNMI on MTMAC (and no Guam Rep.)</p> <p>Need island reps for Rota, Tinian, &amp; Saipan so information can be shared and CNMI represented fairly.</p>	<p><i>Why is it just CNMI on the MTMAC and no one from Guam?</i></p>	<p>The Proclamation identified the members of the Advisory Council as three officials of the CNMI and one representative each from the DOD and the USCG. Governor Fitial nominates MTMAC representatives for CNMI and the Secretaries of the Interior and Commerce appoint members based on nominations. Recommendations for Guam representation can be made from the Governors of CNMI and Guam to the Secretaries for consideration.</p>

Topic	Public Comments	Public Questions	Response
Minerals Management	<p>Make sure indigenous people get a share in any minerals mined in the Trench.</p> <p>The Federal Government should authorize minerals exploration and extraction from the Monument.</p> <p>Legislation should be introduced to authorize mining in the Monument.</p>	<p><i>What will happen to the rights of indigenous people to all the resources on the ocean floor?</i></p> <p><i>What inherent rights do the people of Guam, CNMI, &amp; Micronesia have when natural resources are harvested from the ocean floor?</i></p>	<p>The Proclamation prohibits the removal of Monument resources with exceptions for science and fishing. As such, the commercial harvest of marine minerals is not allowed.</p> <p>For all other waters surrounding CNMI, U.S. law decrees that the marine mineral resources are held by the Federal government for the benefit of all Americans. However, there is no legal framework for permitting mineral extraction from Federal waters surrounding U.S. territories. That is due to the fact that Congress authorized the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement to regulate mineral extraction in Federal waters off the states, leaving out mention of the territories. There have been attempts in Congress over the past several years to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to include the territories but nothing yet has passed.</p>
Monument	<p>We (indigenous people) own all the submerged lands.</p> <p>Article 12 mentions submerged lands so [there is a] need to negotiate.</p>	<p><i>Where is the authority for taking land/waters?</i></p> <p><i>Did the Feds take the Monument from the CNMI?</i></p>	<p>Through the 1975 Covenant agreement with the United States, the CNMI is under the sovereignty of the United States. As a function of national external sovereignty, the U.S. holds paramount rights over seaward submerged lands. The U.S. proclaimed a 200 nmi EEZ in 1983, a 12 nmi territorial sea in 1988, and a 24 nmi contiguous zone in 1999, consistent with customary international law as codified in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.</p> <p>The Monument is held in trust for the benefit of all Americans, including the people of the CNMI and Guam.</p>
Permits	<p>Need permit review board to ensure activities do no harm.</p> <p>Charter vessel should be allowed to fish with only a float plan.</p> <p>Do not implement fee schedule for indigenous people.</p> <p>Permit local people to fish but no commercial fishing.</p>	<p><i>How much would it cost if other countries want to explore the site?</i></p>	<p>National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) Special Use Permits (SUPs) are issued for the Trench and Volcanic Units. Research SUPs are currently issued at no cost to scientists. The details of a permitting process and protocol for activities within the Islands Unit are being developed in the MMP.</p> <p>We recognize that local residents may or may not be persons of Northern Marianas descent. We will consider recreational use permits in the MMP separately from traditional and cultural access permits.</p>
Management	<p>Plan must include strong conservation for the whole ecosystem not just fisheries.</p> <p>Let CNMI be the caretaker of the Monument.</p>	<p><i>Who is in charge of monitoring the Monument after it's all settled, the US or CNMI?</i></p> <p><i>Who has custody of the Monument?</i></p> <p><i>How would you make the Trench Monument more personal to the people of the Marianas?</i></p>	<p>The United States retains custody of the Monument. The Secretary of the Interior has management responsibility for the Monument, in consultation with the Secretary of Commerce, except that the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Secretary of the Interior, has the primary responsibility with respect to fishery-related activities. These management responsibilities are administered primarily by the Service/NWRS and the NOAA/NMFS, and will be conducted in consultation with the Government of the CNMI and the DOD, as provided in the Proclamation.</p> <p>We will develop opportunities to involve local people in the conservation of this unique place, as well as provide traditional access for cultural and religious uses.</p>

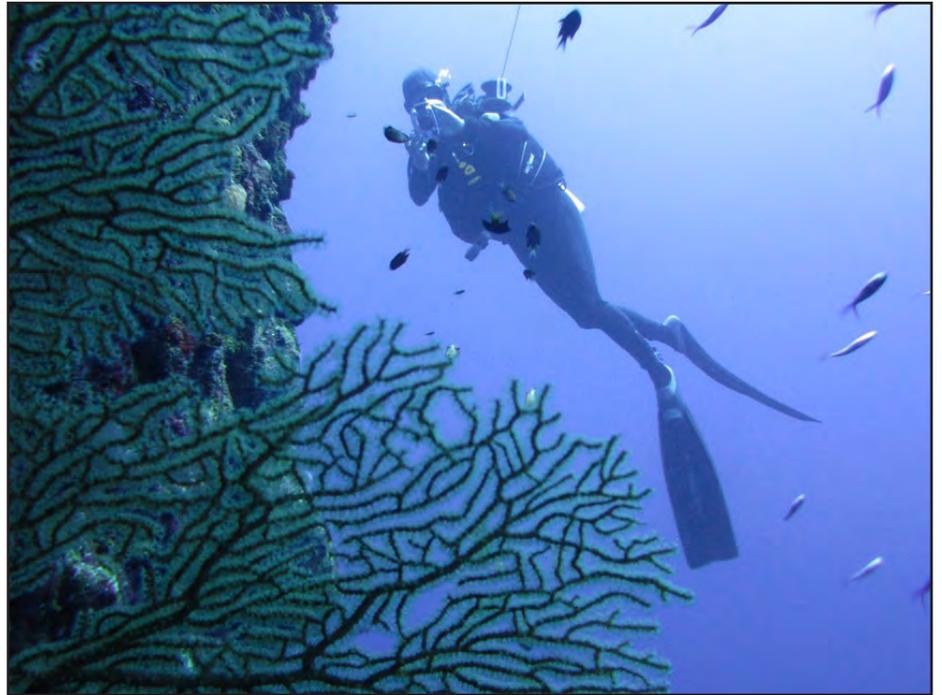
## Learning About the Monument's Coral Reef Ecosystem

A recent NOAA research expedition in the Monument was carried out in the spring of 2011, aboard the NOAA ship *Hi'ialakai*. Under the leadership of Chief Scientists Dr. Jill Zamzow, Dr. Bernardo Vargas-Angel, and Jamison Gove, a diverse team of researchers conducted coral reef ecosystem surveys to assess the status of fishes, corals, algae, marine invertebrates, and the conditions in which these organisms exist.

The scientific data collected during the expedition will help us develop conservation management strategies for the MMP. A copy of the expedition report, *Hi'ialakai*, Cruise 11-01, Pacific Reef and Assessment Program Surveys for Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, may be downloaded from <http://www.pifsc.noaa.gov/library/hiialakai.php>.



*Vertical benthic REA site at Asuncion. Russell Reardon /NOAA*



*A diver photo-documents the unique habitat and organisms found in the Monument. Edmund Coccagna /NOAA*

### Supply Reef

The Supply Reef seamount in the Mariana Arc of Fire National Wildlife Refuge lies about 6 miles northwest of Maug. Its peak is about 26 feet below the ocean's surface.

A few large grey reef sharks cruised around the dive team as they completed tasks to recover a salinity and temperature recorder, along with an old wave and tide recorder anchor. (See photo on page 8.)

### Asuncion

In the Islands Unit, 23 miles southeast of Maug, the Asuncion survey site includes high relief basaltic and rock boulder reefs framed with a living veneer of coral cover.

The Rapid Ecological Assessment (REA) team found an amazing level of diversity in some places, while large predatory fish like the dogtooth tuna patrolled along the perimeter.

The REA includes specialists in each of four categories: fish, coral, algae, and invertebrates. All of the surveys are conducted along a set of transect lines that are laid out by the first team to enter the water (i.e., the fish team). All of the observations are referenced with regard to the same spatial coordinates, producing a more integrated biological description of a reef community than would any single, specialized survey.

You can read the complete mission blog online at: [http://noaacred.blogspot.com/2011\\_04\\_01\\_archive.html](http://noaacred.blogspot.com/2011_04_01_archive.html).

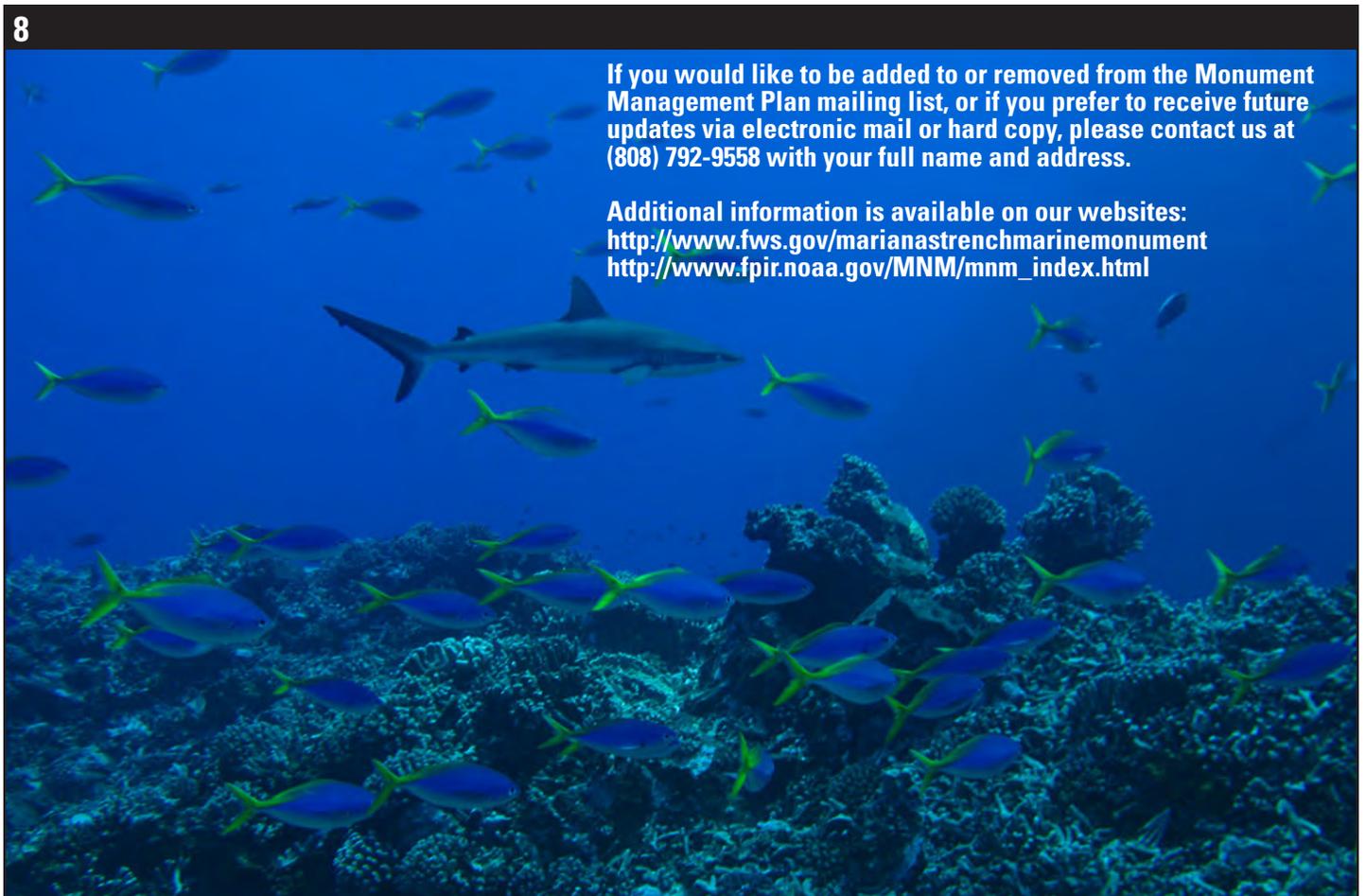
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If you would like to be added to or removed from the Monument Management Plan mailing list, or if you prefer to receive future updates via electronic mail or hard copy, please contact us at (808) 792-9558 with your full name and address.

Additional information 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)



*A grey reef shark cruises amongst a school of yellow-and-blueback fusilier at Supply Reef. Oliver Vetter/NOAA*