

Resolution

No. _____

URGING THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF HAWAII AND THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO SUPPORT THE COMPLETE AND PERMANENT PROTECTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

WHEREAS, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), also known as “Na Kupuna Islands”, or ancestors to the main islands of Hawaii, hold great historical and cultural significance to the Hawaiian people, and are featured in ancient Hawaiian `oli and mele; and

WHEREAS, this chain of islands, encompassing the Island of Nihoa, located to the northwest of Kauai Island, through and including Kure Atoll, stretches for more than 1,200 square miles and remains almost entirely uninhabited; and

WHEREAS, the NWHI, known as the world’s most isolated archipelago, is home to many endemic, rare, threatened, and endangered species including the Hawaiian Monk Seal, Hawaiian Green Sea Turtle, Hawksbill and Leatherback Turtles, millions of migratory sea birds, ancient coral colonies estimated to be over 1,000 years old, a diverse fish population, many of which have been depleted from the waters of the main Hawaiian Islands, in addition to more than 7,000 species of marine plants and animals, of which at least one-quarter are found nowhere else in the world; and

WHEREAS, the NWHI form one of the world’s last remaining intact, predator-dominated ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, the cold waters of the NWHI and the limited nutrient cycling make the NWHI ecosystem extremely delicate and vulnerable to disturbance; and

WHEREAS, on May 13, 2005, the Hawaii Board of Land and Natural Resources proposed administrative rules that would prohibit all extractive uses in State-regulated waters from 0 to 3 miles around the NWHI, while protecting the traditional and cultural practices in the area; and

WHEREAS, on May 16, 2005, United States Representative Ed Case introduced H.R. 2376, known as the “Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Marine Refuge Act of 2005”, designating the NWHI and their associated waters “as a fully protected national marine refuge to preserve in perpetuity their unique and fragile ecosystems, habitats, and communities of flora and fauna, as well as areas of traditional Hawaiian cultural significance”; and

WHEREAS, the NWHI Refuge would encompass 137,000 square miles of reefs and ocean, surpassing the protected area of the Great Barrier Reef by 12,000 square miles, and would increase the protected waters around each island and atoll to 50 miles; and

WHEREAS, the “NWHI Marine Refuge Act of 2005” would provide for the continued traditional use of the refuge by Native Hawaiians for religious, cultural, and sustenance purposes; and

WHEREAS, regulation that is consistent and complementary in both Federal and State waters is critical to ensure the continued preservation of this true pu`uhonua; and

WHEREAS, massive public input and overwhelming support from kupuna, cultural practitioners, fishermen, scientists, and community members have consistently demanded that “the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands is a special place worthy of the highest levels of protection”; and

WHEREAS, the NWHI Refuge is destined to become the State’s largest marine refuge; and

WHEREAS, a national treasure such as this would be a gift to share with our mo`opuna for generations to come; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Maui:

1. That it hereby supports administrative rules that would prohibit all extractive uses in State-regulated waters around the NWHI, while protecting the traditional and cultural practices in the area, as proposed by the Hawaii Board of Land and Natural Resources on May 13, 2005, and urges Governor Linda Lingle to approve them; and
2. That it hereby supports the “Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Marine Refuge Act of 2005”, which would designate the NWHI and their associated waters “as a fully protected national marine refuge to preserve in perpetuity their unique and fragile ecosystems, habitats, and communities of flora and fauna, as well as areas of traditional Hawaiian cultural significance”, and urges the United States Congress to pass H.R. 2376; and
3. That certified copies of the resolution be transmitted to the Honorable Linda Lingle, Governor of the State of Hawaii; the Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, United States Senator; the Honorable Daniel K. Akaka, United States Senator; the Honorable Ed Case, Member of Congress; the Honorable Neil Abercrombie, Member of Congress; the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; the United States Council on Environmental Quality; the Hawaii Audubon Society; and KAHEA: The Hawaiian-Environmental Alliance.

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