

Papa-hānau-moku-ākea

Marine National Monument

The naming process:

The process to give a Hawaiian name to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument began during the Sanctuary designation process as an initiative of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group. In 2006 the group chose two distinguished members of the Hawaiian community to contribute names - Uncle Buzzy Agard and Aunty Pua Kanahale. Once the names were put forth, the Cultural Working group would select among them for an appropriate name for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands managing entity and region.

Uncle Buzzy Agard, an esteemed kupuna and long time fisherman in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands was instrumental in the establishment of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve in 2000, and a long time advocate for the protection of this special place. Uncle Buzzy Agard, who is also affiliated with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), was one of three Native Hawaiian representatives on the Reserve Advisory Council. Aunty Pua Kanahale, is a well known and respected kumu hula, scholar, and spiritual practitioner from Hilo, Hawai'i. Since 2003, she has been the main catalyst for the revival of cultural access trips to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in partnership with the voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a.

The names offered by both Aunty Pua and Uncle Buzzy were brought to the Cultural Working Group in September 2006. Other names were also offered by Keoni Kuoha from the Kamakakūokalani, U. H. Center for Hawaiian Studies and by Kai'iini Kaloi of the Department of Interior's Office of Hawaiian Relations. Three subsequent meetings were held to discuss the names, their meanings and purpose. On January 4, 2007 the group selected Papahānaumokuākea .

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group is comprised of members with long standing interest and involvement in the region. Members come from varied relevant backgrounds, and include academic scholars, teachers, cultural practitioners, community activists, and resource managers that have experience in working directly with issues concerning the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Representatives from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Office of Hawaiian Relations, State of Hawai'i's Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission (KIRC), and Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) were involved in the meetings and discussions that led up to the final decision.

The meaning of the name:

The name Papahānaumokuākea (pronounced Pa-pa-ha-now-mo-ku-ah-kay-uh) comes from an ancient Hawaiian tradition concerning the genealogy and formation of the Hawaiian Islands. Papahānaumoku (who is personified in the earth) and Wākea (who is personified in the expansive sky) were two of the most recognized ancestors of our people. Their union resulted in the creation or "birthing" of the entire archipelago. "Papa" which means "foundational earth," provides the imagery of the numerous low flat islands that stretch across into the northwest. "Ākea" provides the imagery of the "expanse – of space." From Mauna "Ākea" on Hawai'i Island to the low flat "Papa" of the northwest, the physical features define our homeland and Hawaiian identity. The preservation of these names, together, as Papahānaumokuākea, strengthens Hawai'i's cultural foundation and grounds us to an important part of our historical past.

Papahānaumokuākea is a name that will encourage abundance and energize the continued procreative forces of earth, sea, and sky. It reminds us that it is spiritual inspiration that supports the physical world. Papahānaumokuākea will help to continue life for everything that pro-creates, gives birth, a continuum, everything that is part and parcel of our world, the Hawaiian archipelago.

For more information please contact Kekuwa Kikiloi, Native Hawaiian Cultural Program Coordinator of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument: Kekuwa.kikiloi@noaa.gov