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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

**CONTACT: KEIKO BONK, NWHI NETWORK CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR  
@ 808-734-4234 & (CELL) 808-938-6888 • NWHIBONK@EARTHLINK.NET  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NWHI NETWORK DIRECTOR "SHOCKED" BY NEW ALLEGATIONS AGAINST FEDERAL AGENCY Recent Actions By Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WESPAC) Questioned**

**HONOLULU: December, 21, 2006** — The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Network (NWHI Network) a coalition of local and national cultural, fishing, conservation, & science based non-profit organizations responded with deep concern today to the allegations from two local fishing and boating organizations that the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council (WESPAC) has congressional plans to weaken the protections provided to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands by the President of the United States in June 2006 — when the area was proclaimed a National Monument. NWHI Network Campaign Director Keiko Bonk said, "I am shocked and sincerely concerned that a federal government agency is undermining the protection of Hawaii's precious marine resources."

The Oahu Game Fish Club and the Waianae Boat Fishing Club submitted a 2nd letter of complaint this week to the United States Inspector General (IG) at the Department of Commerce with information documenting WESPAC's efforts to counter the intent of the NWHI Marine National Monument. Bonk said "it took nearly 100 years of local and national effort by six U. S. Presidents and the intensive grassroots campaign in Hawai'i over the last six years to convince policy makers to create a no-take area in this pristine and unique wilderness. The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands is one of the last predator-dominated reef ecosystems in the world and we should be proud of our leaders responsible action to save this precious place. Let's not go backward as responsible stewards of the aina." Bonk paraphrased Nainoa Thompson, one of Hawaii's Living Cultural Treasures, recalling his comments during his recent advocacy to protect the Northwestern Hawaiian islands, "If we can't protect this sacred place, then what is left of the culture and spirit of Hawai'i to perpetuate for many generations to come?"

The NWHI Network formed two years ago to assist the state and national campaign to protect the NW Hawaiian archipelago. WESPAC is a federally funded agency and it was the ONLY vocal adversary in the many years of public planning for the protected reserve. The proclamation of the NWHI Marine National Monument came from as a long community planning process. People worked tirelessly volunteering to build a coalition of support for the "full" protection of this place. WESPAC rationalizes its opposition for protection in the defense of a handful of commercial fishing permits in the monument waters. The fishermen holding these permits were divided on a proposed buy-out of their fishing rights recently offered by a local negotiating team with money raised from non-profit conservation organizations such as the Pew Charitable Trusts. The fishermen rejected the private buyout of the fishing permits. The Monument proclamation gives the fishermen a 5-year grace period to stop fishing in the Monument waters.

*The NW Hawaiian Islands Network is a collaboration of six non-profit groups based in Hawai'i and the mainland including: Hawai'i Audubon Society, Na Imi Pono, Hawai'i Fishing and Boating Association, Snorkel Bob Foundation, The Ocean Conservancy, and Marine Conservation Biology Institute.*

**Information on the NWHI Network can be found at [www.nwhinetwork.net](http://www.nwhinetwork.net)**

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