

Opponents of US marine national monuments are moving to roll them back, strip fishing restrictions

Last November, MPA News speculated on [whether the election of Donald Trump as US President would bring a rollback of MPAs](#) — specifically the large marine national monuments that former President Barack Obama designated or expanded under the US Antiquities Act. (These include the 1.5-million-km² Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, the largest protected area in the world.) Our [addendum to that article provided details](#) on *how* Trump and the Republican Party-controlled Congress might pare back restrictions on fishing or other activities in the MPAs. At that time, one Republican member of Congress was already asking the then-incoming Administration to cancel past executive orders that had designated and expanded the 1.27-million-km² Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument.

Although President Trump [has not yet indicated](#) whether he supports or opposes such a rollback, opponents of the monuments are starting to press forward:

- On 7 March, a coalition of northeastern US fishing associations [filed a lawsuit](#) challenging former President Obama's September 2016 creation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument, arguing that he exceeded his authority.
- Also on 7 March, Republican members of Congress Rob Bishop and Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen sent a letter to President Trump [requesting the removal of all prohibitions on fishing in marine national monuments](#)
- On 15 March, the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans held a hearing titled "Examining the Creation and Management of Marine Monuments and Sanctuaries". Republican members [voiced their objections](#) to "the lack of local input, transparency and scientific scrutiny in the marine monument designation process."
- On 17 March, the eight US regional Fishery Management Councils [mailed a joint letter](#) to President Trump raising concerns about fishing restrictions in marine national monuments. (The joint letter references a 2016 resolution that [is available here](#).)

In other MPA-related news, a draft budget document obtained by the Washington Post in early March indicated the Trump Administration's interest in [slashing several specific programs within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA). This would include eliminating funding for the nation's 29 National Estuarine Research Reserves — an MPA system that is co-managed with state and local agencies. (The Trump Administration's official budget blueprint to Congress on 16 March called for US\$250 million in cuts to NOAA programs "supporting coastal and marine management, research, and education" but it did not specify which programs might be included in those cuts, beyond the [Sea Grant](#) program.)

To stay informed on US coastal and ocean-related developments coming out of the White House, or to submit a confidential news tip, visit OpenChannels' [Trump Watch page](#).

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