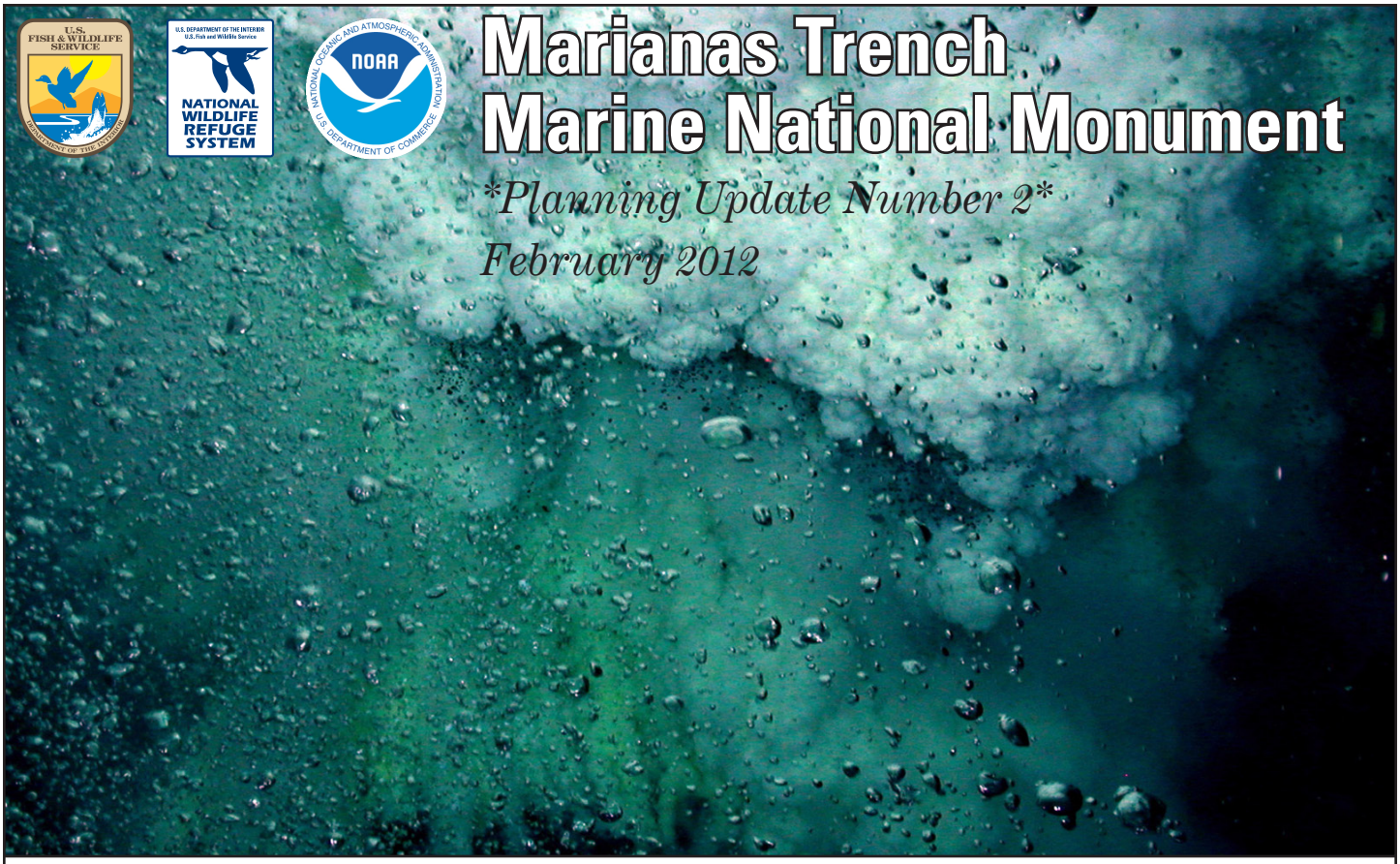

Brimstone Pit volcano releases an extraordinary number of bubbles. Credit: Submarine Ring of Fire 2006 Exploration, NOAA

Help Us Plan for the Future

Public Scoping Meetings for Monument Management Planning

Public scoping meetings are opportunities for you to help us identify the issues to be addressed in the Monument Management Plan (MMP) and to have your questions answered about the planning process.

We are scheduling open-house style public meetings on Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and Guam in February. Your insights and observations are needed to provide a more complete and thoughtful process. Please share your ideas with us by attending one of our public meetings or by submitting written comments.

To Provide Comments During the Planning Process Contact:

Via mail: Heidi Hirsh
NOAA, NMFS
1601 Kapiolani Blvd., #1110
Honolulu, HI 96814

Via e-mail: MTMNM@noaa.gov
Subject line should read "Marianas Trench MNM"

Via Fax: 808.973.2941

Saipan
Date: Friday, February 24, 2012
Time: 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Location: Multi-Purpose Center
Beach Road
Susupe

Tinian
Date: Saturday, February 25, 2012
Time: 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Location: Tinian Elementary School
San Jose Village

Rota
Date: Monday, February 27, 2012
Time: 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Location: Rota Round House
Songsong

Guam
Date: Wednesday, February 29, 2012
Time: 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Location: University of Guam
Anthony Leon Guerrero Multi-Purpose Room #129
Mangilao

Draft Vision

Rising from the abyss is a primal frontier that speaks to the wonder of existence. Vibrant and diverse ecosystems, fueled by unique biogeochemical processes, are conserved in perpetuity for the benefit of present and future generations.

Monument Overview

The total Monument area consists of approximately 96,714 square miles of submerged lands and waters of the Mariana Archipelago. The Monument designation provides international, national, and local recognition that the Mariana Trench is preserved for seabirds, sea turtles, unique coral reefs and the greatest diversity of seamount and hydrothermal vent life yet discovered in the Western Pacific Ocean.

The Islands Unit encompasses the waters and submerged lands of the three northernmost Mariana Islands (Farallon de Pajaros, Maug, and Asuncion) from the mean low water line out approximately 50 nautical miles (nmi). The Volcanic Unit encompasses 21 designated volcanic features and the surrounding submerged lands out to 1 nmi radius. The Trench Unit encompasses the submerged lands within the Mariana Trench extending from northern end to the southern limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone.

No waters are included in the Volcanic and Trench Units and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands government maintains all authority for managing the three islands within the Islands Unit above the mean low water line.

The Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Secretary of the Department of Commerce collaborate in their management of the Monument through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in cooperation with the Department of Defense, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Volcanic and Trench Units are also managed as units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Marianas Trench MNM Management Plan will fulfill Service requirements for comprehensive conservation planning for national wildlife refuges.

The Western Pacific Fishery Management Council and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, with consideration of input from the public, are in the process of adopting non-commercial fishing regulations for the Islands Unit of the Marianas Trench MNM, in consultation with the Service.

Asuncion's beautiful azure lagoon (Islands Unit) © Larry Lee

Summary of Public Scoping Comments to Date

1. Proposed Visitor Center

Establish a visitor and information center on Saipan, where the findings of the research scientists may be displayed and would be easily accessible to other scientists, tourists and the resident population. Satellite stations on Tinian and Rota should also be considered.

2. Research Program

The proclamation exempted those Federal agencies involved in managing the Monument from seeking approval for their research projects from the other Federal managers. The CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife should also be exempt from obtaining a Federal permit.

3. Ecosystem Management

The Monument boundary should be restored to its original vision and intent: a marine protected area that includes all of the CNMI's northern islands (including the land) and the entire stretch of the Marianas Trench. To protect and preserve biodiversity and to restore the former richness of the resources requires a holistic approach to the area, which the present arrangement does not allow.

Promote conservation over exploitation.

4. Education and Outreach

Provide opportunities for CNMI students and teachers to accompany scientists on their research missions, so the students may obtain hands-on knowledge and experience of what is involved in careers in this area, and teachers may enrich their own knowledge for use in their classrooms.

5. Monitoring and Enforcement

As much as possible, monitoring and enforcement should be assigned to the federal government to preclude any appearance of favoritism.

In order for law enforcement agencies to properly enforce regulations they should clearly delineate what is prohibited and generate a strong, yet fair, penalty schedule to deter and prosecute violators effectively.

6. Ancestral Ties to Monument

The MMP should continue in the direction established by President Bush when he recognized the historical ties the people of the Mariana archipelago have with "former" ancestral waters that are now included within Monument boundaries.

7. Vessel Groundings

Current protections from marine vessel traffic are inadequate, as vessel groundings have recently occurred at other similar remote refuges. The environmental assessment should provide an analysis of the vessel traffic phenomenon that cause damage to marine resources and explore possible solutions as to how this type of damage can be prevented.

8. Climate Change

The potential impacts of climate change should be a central consideration in the development of management plans.

9. Fishing

Scoping comments were received regarding fishing in the monument. Fishing regulations for the Islands Unit are being addressed through the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council process.

Tentative Planning Schedule

Planning Step:	Target Date:
Finalize Public Scoping	Spring 2012
Develop Alternatives & Draft MT MMP/EA	2012 - 2013
Public Review/Comment on Draft MT MMP/EA	Fall 2013
Final MT MMP, Rules & Regulations	Winter 2013 - Spring 2014

Schedule dates are tentative and subject to change as the planning process progresses.

Marianas Trench Marine National Monument
300 Ala Moana Blvd., Rm. 5-231
Honolulu, HI 96850

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

Farallon de Pajaros (Bird Rock) is the northernmost island in the Marianas archipelago. © Larry Lee