World Heritage Nomination


About the World Heritage List
World Heritage sites are globally significant to all people of the world. Currently 878 sites from 144 countries are listed by UNESCO. These places are representative of the most universal and significant aspects of natural and cultural heritage for future generations. If designated, Papahānaumokuākea would join sites such as East Africa’s Serengeti, the Egyptian pyramids, Latin America’s Baroque cathedrals, Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park, and the Galapagos Islands on the World Heritage list.

Nomination of Papahānaumokuākea
Papahānaumokuākea was nominated as a “mixed” site, for both its natural and cultural significance to the world. Papahānaumokuākea is the first site nominated with cultural connections to the sea and would add to the small number of World Heritage sites in the Pacific. It would be the first marine site for the United States.

Papahānaumokuākea’s nomination is based on its exceptional geological and ecological processes, the last or only habitat for some of the world’s most endangered species, and its status as a sacred place in the history, culture, and cosmology of Native Hawaiian people.

Looking Forward
Papahānaumokuākea will now undergo a review by the advisory bodies of UNESCO World Heritage Center - the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for its natural resource heritage and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) for its cultural resource heritage. Based on these reviews and recommendations, the World Heritage Committee will then make a determination on Papahānaumokuākea’s proposed listing in 2010.

To learn more about Papahānaumokuākea as a potential World Heritage site, visit the Monument’s website at www.papahanaumokuakea.gov
Native Hawaiian practitioners consider Papahānaumokuākea to be one of Hawai‘i’s last-remaining ‘āina momona (places of abundance).

- One of the world’s last apex predator-dominated coral reef ecosystems, abounding in sharks and jacks, a feature characteristic of reefs prior to significant human exploitation.
- A spectacular example of evolution in isolation, where a high degree of marine and terrestrial endemism occurs.
- Vital habitat for foraging, pupping and nesting for critically endangered Hawaiian monk seals, Laysan ducks, and threatened Hawaiian green turtles.
- Over 14 million seabirds nest in the islands and forage in the waters of Papahānaumokuākea, making it the world’s largest tropical seabird rookery.

-An unparalleled example of the later stages of volcanic island and atoll formation.

-In indigenous cosmology and tradition, Papahānaumokuākea encompasses the sacred region where all life originates and to which Native Hawaiian ancestors return after death.

-Training grounds for traditional and contemporary Hawaiian wayfinders (non-instrument navigators).

-Highest concentrations of ritual sites in Hawai‘i, bearing remarkable testimony to the shared historical origins of all Polynesian societies.