

ABSTRACT

TITLE: Governance in Marine Protected Areas: An Examination of the Regulatory and Management Framework

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In the United States, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are somewhat of a blanket designation for many types of management areas; including preserving cultural and natural heritage sites, and sites of sustainable biological productivity. In May of 2000, then President Clinton established Executive Order 13158, to “protect the significant natural and cultural resources within the marine environment for the benefit of present and future generations by strengthening and expanding the Nation’s system of marine protected areas (MPAs).” The overall management of MPA’s via the National MPA Center was tasked to the National Ocean Service (NOS) which also has jurisdiction over areas of ocean conservation and national marine sanctuaries. However, MPA management by the NOS rather than the National Marine Fisheries Service may result in a preservationist rather than use-oriented management strategy, and present bias against those stakeholders whose primary interest in the nations’s marine resources is sustainable use. It can also result in intradepartmental conflicts within NOAA. This conflict of interests makes an inquiry into the regulatory framework surrounding MPAs especially interesting. An examination of the recent events surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve will underscore the conflict and crosscutting interests involved.