

Advocates of monument expansion a case study of cognitive dissonance

By Caleb McMahan

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Since attending the recent public meeting on the proposed expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, I've been feeling a sense of déjà vu.

Listening to the testimonies of monument-expansion proponents has recalled my college days and, in particular, a memorable lesson from Psychology 101.

Cognitive dissonance theory traces its origin back to the late 1950s when psychologist Leon Festinger first described the behavior of a doomsday cult that believed the end of the world was imminent and that a spaceship would be coming to pick them up.

What experts found was that when people are faced with information that conflicts with a firmly held belief (i.e., the space ship doesn't come), they will experience discomfort (aka dissonance) and exhibit predictable behaviors in order to reduce it without having to completely abandon the core belief.

A core belief that proponents of monument expansion seem to hold is that we need to protect our oceans for future generations, and that making the proposed monument boundary off-limits to com-



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mercial fishing is necessary to achieve this.

But since the proposal was made, opponents have pointed to a lack of peer-reviewed scientific data showing such a conservation benefit exists, and further, that the Hawaii longline fishery does not constitute a threat to the area's biodiversity or cultural artifacts.

So there it is. Information that is in conflict with that core belief. What was so alarming about the Aug. 1 meeting is that monument-expansion proponents seem to react precisely how cognitive dissonance theory predicts: to ignore or deny the conflicting information altogether.

For example, it was

pointed out by a pelagic fisheries biologist that tuna do not spawn in the proposed area. Ten minutes later, a monument proponent cited among a list of expansion reasons the need to give fish a place for reproducing away from the threat of longline fishing operations.

Another opponent cited evidence that longline fishing in no way impacts the unique black coral species found on the ocean floor since fishing gear does not reach the bottom — yet was followed by a proponent who testified that protecting that coral species and other benthic wildlife was indeed grounds for monument expansion.

ANOTHER behavioral response to cognitive dissonance is that people will modify their core belief in order to accommodate, but still not accept the new information.

This, too, was rampant among pro-monument testimonies. In face of evidence that the longline fleet does not constitute a threat to the endangered monk seal, some proponents changed their tune, saying this is not about the monk seal or banning fishing, but about setting an example for the rest of the world in protecting our oceans in general. Or that protecting against climate

change is the justification.

When contrary scientific evidence for the climate change argument was presented, the core belief for expansion supporters shifted again into the need to prevent the inherent greed of industry from imperiling the area's natural beauty.

Throughout the session, high school students at microphones were applauded for giving cognitive dissonance-laced testimony irrelevant to the science-based information.

It's easy to take a stand on an issue. It's much more challenging to develop informed positions and engage stakeholders from across user groups to come up with collaborative solutions. We should be introducing our students to the complexities of resource management instead of suggesting that activism is a form of scientific inquiry.

THE AUG. 1 public meeting was a disaster. It demonstrated not only that Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance is on the mark, but also the consequences it can have in dividing communities and undermining the science-based management structures essential to successfully balance the interests of conservation and sustainable use of public resource.

By Mike Markrich

Recently it was revealed that the likely cause of the hepatitis A outbreak in Honolulu came from tainted imported frozen seafood.

The proponents of the expanded Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument plan have been busy with an expensive public relations campaign that extols all the good that will come from closing off an ocean area the size of Texas near Honolulu, the nation's largest per capita fish market.

What they are not telling you is that to make up for the lack of supply here when the ban goes into effect, more fish will be imported to meet demand, and the health risks with limited quality controls and no transparency will be borne by local residents and tourists.

For many years, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI), where the monument is located, has been the subject of two powerful and mutually hostile narratives. On the one hand is the view of the local fishing industry, the local fishing council and their political allies in the visitor industry.

Their position is that because all commercial fishing in U.S. waters is highly regulated, there was never a need for the fishing ban and takeover by the federal government of the NWHI. No overfishing takes place.

The local fishing industry has a long history, backed largely by a Japanese fish tradition of ensuring the quality and safety of the fish it sells.

On the other hand are federal officials and large environmental organizations and their local political allies. They believe that expanding federal control would allow

more fish to be born in the protected area regardless of what happens outside it. In their mind, the benefits of protecting this vast area from overfishing outweigh any negative input from frozen seafood imports.

In the past, the local fishing industry and its Democratic allies could count on Democrats such as the late U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye to oppose the takeover of state waters by federal agencies.

But in 2006, this changed when Republican Gov. Linda Lingle facilitated the creation with President George W.

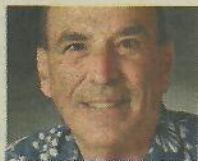
Bush of the entire NWHI as the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. A memorandum of understanding between the state and federal governments was signed.

Critics at the time said the unlimited closing of an area the size of California without any compensation for

the loss of alternative uses to Native Hawaiians indefinitely was a deal no Alaskan or other Native American group would have ever agreed to. They believe that to expand this to an area nearly five times as large will exacerbate the income inequality their community suffers.

If the area where fishing is banned is expanded, Waikiki restaurants will still consume large amounts of fish. But ever more will come from the Asian companies fishing the waters of poor island states, who lack the financial means to protect or monitor them. Many foreign fishers work in slave-like conditions.

The expansion of the monument would be a well-meaning effort. Unfortunately, it would do nothing to solve the problems of overfishing in the Pacific region, quality control for consumers or social justice.



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**Costs will outweigh
benefits of larger
marine sanctuary**

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Bid to expand Papahānaumokuākea must be public, transparent process

HSA 7/31/2016

By Daniel K. Akaka and George R. Ariyoshi

We oppose the proposed expansion of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM).

It is unconscionable that such a significant policy might be enacted with a profound lack of transparency and public process.

This is disturbing and has caused many people in Hawaii to question the motives behind the proposal.

We understand that, at the urging of special interests, President Barack Obama's administration is considering using the U.S. Antiquities Act of 1906 to extend the PMNM from its current 50 mile offshore perimeter to 200 miles offshore around the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

The U.S. Antiquities Act excludes any consideration and validation by the U.S. Congress and the state of Hawaii and its Native Hawaiian residents.

This would be a presidential proclamation for an extended federal monument. If it increases to 200 miles offshore, then that amounts to a 350 percent expansion from 140,000



Daniel K. Akaka, left, was a U.S. senator from Hawaii from 1990 to 2013. George R. Ariyoshi served as governor of Hawaii from 1974 to 1986.

square miles to 583,000 square miles. The size of the proposed PMNM expansion at 200 miles is equivalent to the combined land area of the states of California, Oregon, Washington and Texas.

WE ARE no longer in office. We simply care about the people of Hawaii and are concerned about the future of our state.

The proposed PMNM expansion could affect the rights of Native Hawaiians, the residents and businesses of Hawaii, and our state's right to govern its own natural resources.

The ripple effect of the expansion on Hawaii's economy could cost jobs and increase costs to consumers. For these reasons, a basic economic impact

study should be conducted.

Hawaii is a unique state. It consists of small islands surrounded by a vast ocean, and the water is an extension of our state.

We depend on the ocean for food, employment, recreation and the perpetuity of Native Hawaiian culture.

We have demonstrated our passion for, and commitment to, responsible stewardship of our coastal waters.

Hawaii is the only state that has met Aichi Target 11 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls for the protection of 10 percent of coastal and marine areas by 2020. In addition, nearly 23 percent of the waters surrounding Hawaii are no-take reserves where fishing is prohibited, which is a greater percentage than scientists recommend protecting to maintain healthy oceans.

A PMNM expansion of this magnitude would include the entire U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. (The proclamation would not affect the EEZ around the main Hawaiian

Islands.)

In other words, U.S. fishing vessels would have no territorial advantage. They would be forced out of the EEZ into international waters, where fishing vessels from all over the world are free to fish today.

Protecting our environment is our highest priority. The care of our land and ocean should be the responsibility of the state of Hawaii.

We need an open, honest dialogue about the impact of the proposed expansion.

How will it really affect Hawaii culturally, socially and economically?

We must think through the consequences of such an important policy issue before making decisions that will affect our state as a whole.

WE WERE honored to serve the wonderful people of Hawaii while in office, and we continue to care for them.

The federal government should not rush into a decision about expanding the PMNM without thinking through the consequences and providing the requisite transparency for Hawaii and its people before considering the expansion.

MONUMENT

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Schatz; hundreds of scientists; environmental organizations; and prominent Native Hawaiian leaders, including William Aila, deputy director of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands; Nainoa Thompson, president of the Polynesian Voyaging Society; and Kamanao pono Crabbe, head of the state Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

But on Tuesday about 70 opponents of the proposal, including advocates for the longline fishing industry, took to the state Capitol in protest, toting signs that read, "Fairness 4 Fishermen," "Something Smells Fishy," "Hawaii Fishing Is Sustainable" and "Leave Our Oceans Alone."

The longline fishing industry would be banned from fishing in the protected area.

Former U.S. Sen. Daniel Akaka and former Hawaii Gov. George Ariyoshi were among a parade of speakers who criticized the expansion, saying that it was being unduly rushed in anticipation of the World Conservation Congress and would harm the fishing industry. They also argued that Hawaii shouldn't allow the federal government to dictate what happens in local waters, even though the federal government already has jurisdiction over the area in question.

"The ocean belongs to us.

We ought to be the ones who decide what kind of use to make of the ocean," said Ariyoshi. "And we don't want someone from the outside to come, or people from the outside to come, and tell us how to live with the ocean. They can make those decisions where they live, but don't come and tell us how we who live here can use the ocean."

If Obama decides to expand the monument, he's expected to do so under the Antiquities Act of 1906, which gives him unilateral power to designate U.S. lands and waters as national monuments.

In 2006 former President George W. Bush created the current monument, designating 139,800 square miles as protected. Under the proposal, the area would be expanded to 582,578 square miles.

The area contains more than 7,000 marine species, about a quarter of which scientists believe are endemic. The area is home to large populations of sharks, Hawaiian groupers and other large predatory fish that have been heavily overfished, according to a letter sent to Obama in January from Aila, Crabbe and others asking that the monument be expanded.

OPPONENTS complained Tuesday that Hawaii resi-

dents aren't being given adequate opportunity to weigh in on the proposal.

"It bypasses any decision by the Congress and the state of Hawaii, and this is what this is all about," said Akaka. "Hawaii needs to know what's to happen, and there should be transparency."

The Obama administration has scheduled community meetings for Monday in Waipahu and Tuesday at Kauai Community College in Lihue, but critics say this is inadequate.

Peter Apo, in breaking with fellow trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, said that the proposal "strikes at the very heart of our sovereignty as a state."

"In 1893 they overthrew the kingdom and established federal control, and here in 2016 they are doing the same thing with our oceans, except now the victim is the state of Hawaii," he said.

Apo noted that the size of the expanded monument would be double the size of Texas.

"What is the rush?" he said, echoing the posters surrounding him. "Try wait."

OHA has voted to support the expansion as long as the office is elevated to a co-trustee position, the cultural significance of the area to Native Hawaiians is recognized and there is no boundary expansion toward the islands of Niihau and Kauai.

OHA said in a statement Tuesday that in the 10 years

since the creation of the current monument, no Native Hawaiian who has applied for a permit for the area has been denied access. OHA also noted that the waters designated for expansion have been solely managed by the federal government since 1976.

"Papahānaumokuākea will be the largest marine sanctuary in the world and make us a global leader to show conservation and progress can work hand-in-hand to create a more sustainable future for everyone," Crabbe, OHA's CEO, said in a statement.

THE PROPOSAL has divided members of the overwhelmingly Democratic state Legislature. In April, 28 state lawmakers sent a letter to Obama opposing the expansion; a number of them attended the Tuesday rally, including Reps. Della Au Belatti, Calvin Say, Dee Morikawa, Bert Kobayashi, Lynn DeCoite, Kyle Yamashita and Ryan Yamane.

There is "no scientific justification or conservation benefit" to expanding the monument, the lawmakers wrote in the letter to Obama. "There is only the potential to do harm to Hawaii's economy, lifestyle, culture and identity."

The lawmakers said that further restricting waters for fishing would impinge upon the state's efforts to achieve greater food security.

Hawaii's longline fishing industry, which uses lines of hooks to catch bigeye tuna,

a favorite in Hawaii, as well as marlin, swordfish, mahi-mahi, moonfish, shark and more, brought in 27 million pounds of fish in 2013 with a dockside value of \$85.4 million, according to the lawmakers.

Roughly 8 percent of the catch is brought in from the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands in areas that would be off-limits to fishermen if Obama expands the monument.

The industry includes about 600 fishermen who spend about two weeks at sea at a time, said Sean Martin, president of the Hawaii Longline Association.

He said the association was concerned about the increasing expansion of waters where they can't fish.

However, supporters of the expansion say that the longline fishing industry wouldn't be affected much, if at all, by the expansion since longliners are governed by quotas, which they sometimes reach before the year is up. They can fish in other areas, including international waters, to meet these quotas.

Aila said small-boat fishermen would still be allowed in the area and that longline fishing restrictions would help create a more sustainable supply of fish.

The ocean floor would also be off-limits to mineral mining, he noted, which scientists have warned could affect thousands of marine species.

Aila said the argument that the expansion would undermine local food sustainability didn't make sense given that the fishing industry exports a significant portion of its fish while bringing in foreign imports.

"They import low-quality, junk stuff all the time," he said.

He said that the World Conservation Congress was an ideal time to expand the monument.

"The possibility of President Obama in the last six months of his presidency having the ability to use the Antiquities Act at a time when the world's attention is put on Hawaii was certainly a consideration but not the only consideration," he said. "Other considerations are providing a reserve for tuna, protecting important resources on the bottom of the ocean from ocean mining and protecting the maritime cultural resources of the U.S. and Japan."