

Middle Bank is located between the islands of Ni'ihau and Nihoa and straddles the boundary of the existing monument. It is approximately 5 to 7 million years old, geologically, and one of several banks in the monument that were created by volcanic activity and eventually subsided into the ocean. Middle Bank supports deep-sea coral and bottomfish communities. The portions of Middle Bank outside of the boundary are occasionally fished for bottomfish.

"Closing Middle Bank entirely to fishing would not make fishers happy. However, Ka'ula Rock does not play anywhere near such an important role for the bottomfish fishery and, therefore, one idea is to make an agreement with the state and bottomfishers whereby the Ka'ula Rock Restricted Fishing Area be removed as an exchange for expanding the monument over Middle Bank. Fishermen as well as the state would only benefit from this deal since it would be providing a protected recruitment source to the MHI for this fishery," wrote Chris Kelley, affiliate faculty, University of Hawai'i, Department of Oceanography, in scoping testimony.

### **Tsunami Alert That Never Came**

Where was the January Hawai'i tsunami alert? According to NASA, the January eruption of an underwater volcano near Tonga was hundreds of times more powerful than the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. The blast sent volcanic material surging as high as 25 miles into the atmosphere and generated tsunami waves up to 49 feet high that hit parts of the Tongan archipelago. Kona's Sea Quest dive shop owner Manu Powers told *West Hawaii Today*, "We have tens of thousands of dollars in damage." At Hilo's Wailoa River, Shawn Zenor's five-ton sampan was tossed onto the concrete walkway. **continued . . .**

*HPN 3-2022*  
**Kaula Rock for  
Middle Bank Closure**

There is currently scoping underway to make the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands a National Marine Sanctuary. A sanctuary would add further legal protection to the area. Included in the discussion is putting all of Kaua'i's Middle Bank into the sanctuary in exchange for taking restrictions off Ka'ula Rock. Middle Bank is a *koa*, an uprising of the seabed that comes within 180 feet of the surface.