



For Immediate Release

**NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ASSOCIATION APPLAUDS
WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCEMENT**
New NW Hawaiian Islands Monument Extends Wildlife Refuge Protections

WASHINGTON, DC – June 15, 2006 – The National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA), the only organization dedicated exclusively to protecting, enhancing and expanding the National Wildlife Refuge System, today applauded President Bush’s announcement that the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are to be declared a national monument. This decision will establish the world’s largest marine protected area, helping to reinforce strict conservation measures for fish and wildlife dependent on the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge, the monument’s centerpiece.

“The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands have been part of a 600,000 acre refuge since 1909 when President Teddy Roosevelt created the Hawaiian Island Bird Reservation to quell the poaching of bird feathers for ladies hats at the turn of the 20th century. Since that time, the islands have been protected from commercial fishing and other ecological disturbances by the National Wildlife Refuge making them home to some of the most pristine coral reefs left on Earth,” said Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. “We are pleased that the new national marine monument will protect a critical buffer zone around these refuges. Now, it is imperative that Congress follows up the President’s initiative with a commitment of funds for oversight and maintenance of this marine monument so that the area remains a place of healthy ecosystems and unspoiled beauty.”

National monument status will immediately protect the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, a condition that is firmly supported by the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

About NWRA

Established in 1975, the National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only organization dedicated exclusively to protecting, enhancing and expanding the National Wildlife Refuge System, lands and waters set aside by the American people to protect our country's diverse wildlife heritage. A national membership organization, the organization benefits from the support of U.S. Fish and Wildlife professionals, more than 100 refuge “Friends” group affiliates, and thousands of individual members in all states. For more information, visit www.refugenet.org.