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Refuge Association Applauds Creation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument

Today, President Obama announced the creation of the first marine monument in U.S. Atlantic waters. Located approximately 150 miles off the coast of Cape Cod, the 4,913 square mile Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument is the latest addition to the National Wildlife Refuge System and will be jointly administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The President made his announcement at the 3rd annual Our Ocean Conference, hosted by Secretary Kerry and the U.S. State Department, exactly three weeks after he created the world's largest protected area by expanding Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument to 373 million acres. Commercial fishing and other offshore extraction activities, such as mining and drilling, will be prohibited within the monument, while recreational fishing may continue.

“The creation of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument is a victory for conservation that will have positive impacts that reach far beyond the monument's boundary,” said David Houghton, President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument protects fragile deep-sea ocean ecosystems in some of the most extreme undersea terrain in U.S. Atlantic Waters. The undersea mountains, or “seamounts”, now under monument protection are taller than the Rocky Mountain's highest peak, climbing an astounding 7,000 feet off the ocean floor. Conversely, the monument's canyons delve more than a mile below the ocean floor, and some are even deeper than the Grand Canyon.

At just over three million acres, this Atlantic monument is significantly smaller than its 300 million-acre Pacific cousins, yet the corals that have existed here for more than a millennia and the hundreds of other species of sea life that call this monument home will enjoy the highest level of oceanic protections in a region that has been among the hardest hit by two of the biggest threats to the world's oceans: overfishing and climate change. Just as in other “no-take” marine protected areas around the world, the monument is expected to have a positive “spillover effect” that increases the population of popular



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commercial predator fish species, such as tuna, and that benefits whales and other marine life in the North Atlantic.

While the original monument proposal was larger than the 4,913 square miles that received protection today, concerns from local commercial fishermen were taken into account to ensure their livelihoods will continue to thrive sustainably while also conserving as much marine habitat as possible.

President Obama has placed more lands and waters into conservation than any other president in history, cementing his environmental legacy – and changing the National Wildlife Refuge System forever. In less than a month, the Refuge System has grown by almost 400 million acres, all of which has been open ocean. This brings the total acreage of the National Wildlife Refuge System to 836 million acres, of which approximately 100 million is terrestrial. This is a new frontier for the Refuges System and all of its supporters. With such a tremendous management responsibility for a network of lands and waters larger than the country of India, it is now more critical than ever to provide the National Wildlife Refuge System with the resources it needs so that the United States of America maintains its rightful place as the world's conservation leader.

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The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is to conserve America's wildlife heritage for future generations through strategic programs that protect, enhance, and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System and the landscapes beyond its boundaries.

To learn more about the National Wildlife Refuge Association, please visit our [website](#) or join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).