

## **President Obama proposes vast expansion of Pacific marine sanctuaries; Republicans call it an overreaching Executive action**

*WASHINGTON-- June 17, 2014 --* President Obama announced Tuesday his intent to make a broad swath of the central Pacific Ocean off-limits to fishing, energy exploration and other activities.

The proposal, slated to go into effect later this year after a comment period, could create the world's largest marine sanctuary and double the area of ocean globally that is fully protected.

"I'm going to use my authority to protect some of our nation's most precious marine landscapes," Obama said in a video to participants at a State Department conference, adding that while the ocean is being degraded, "We cannot afford to let that happen. That's why the United States is leading the fight to protect our oceans."

[Read the full story by Juliet Eilperin in the Washignton Post](#)

The *Washington Post* further reported that the "oceans effort, led by Secretary of State John F. Kerry and White House counselor John D. Podesta, is likely to spark a new political battle with Republicans over the scope of Obama's executive powers."

And, in fact, shortly after the President's announcement, the House Natural Resources Committee majority referred to the action as an "overreaching Executive action to unilaterally lock-up huge portions of the Pacific Ocean."

Committee Chairman Doc Hastings said, in a written statement, "For years the Obama Administration has threatened to impose ocean zoning to shut down our oceans, and today the President is making good on that threat. This is yet another example of how an Imperial President is intent on taking unilateral action, behind closed doors, to impose new regulations and layers of restrictive red-tape. Oceans, like our federal lands, are intended to be multiple-use and open for a wide range of economic activities that includes fishing, recreation, conservation, and energy production. It appears this Administration will use whatever authorities - real or made-up - to close our ocean and coastal areas with blatant disregard for possible economic consequences."

"This Administration is creating an unworkable patchwork of management regimes that will hurt our economy and further strain our enforcement capabilities. The State Department just completed negotiating several science-based international fishery management agreements in the Pacific and is working on changes to an existing international agreement to allow U.S. tuna boats to have access to waters in the South Pacific. This announcement undercuts all of that work and will likely make the U.S. tuna fleet even less viable, meaning in the not-too-distant future all of America's tuna will be caught by foreign vessels."