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Marine sanctuary expansion alarms Pacific governors

Emmanuel T. Erediano
May 2, 2023

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Acropora corals grow toward the sunlight to form beautiful, massive tables at Palmyra Atoll, part of the Pacific Rem Monument.

Photo by Jeff Milisen/NOAA

THE prospect of expanding a marine sanctuary has alarmed CNMI Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Guam Gov. Lourdes Leon Guerrero and American Samoa Gov. Lemanu Peleti Mauga.

In their joint letter to President Joseph Biden, the three governors requested a meeting **at**

your earliest convenience."

"We are alarmed and concerned over the prospect of expanding potential fishery closures through designating a marine sanctuary within the full U.S. economic exclusive zones of the Pacific Remote Island Areas which already include a Marine National Monument," Palacios, Leon Guerrero and Mauga told the president in a letter.

They said further closures of waters around the U.S. Pacific islands would be devastating to the local tuna economy of American Samoa and deprive the Pacific territories of economic development opportunities into the future.

The governors said fisheries are the leading source of economic development that binds them to neighboring Pacific islands.

They said further closures would be in direct conflict with the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and run counter to the principles of equity and environmental justice as outlined in Executive Orders 13984 and 14008.

"Our already disadvantaged and marginalized communities carry a disproportionate burden for meeting national conservation goals. We do not believe taking further action to fully close waters around the Pacific Remote Island Areas [is] necessary to fulfill the aspirations of your 'America the Beautiful' initiative," the governors said.

They requested further consultation on the matter before any decision is made, "because our communities and constituents inhabit islands in proximity to the Pacific Remote Island Areas. Please have your staff reach out to us and arrange a meeting, either in person or —

virtual."

Emmanuel Erediano

Reporter

A bachelor of arts in journalism graduate, he started his career as a police beat reporter. Loves to cook. Eats death threats for breakfast.