

Marianas Trench Marine National Monument



NOAA Submarine Ring of Fire 2004 Exploration and the NOAA Vents Program

The waters of the Northern Mariana Islands contain a remarkable abundance of species, some of which are specially adapted to the Marianas Trench, the deepest place on earth.

CONSERVING SPECIAL PLACES IN THE SEA

Few places provide the opportunity for ecosystem conservation on a truly oceanic scale. A marine monument in the waters around the northernmost three islands of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands—Maug, Asuncion and Uracus—now protects and preserves a portion of the world's deepest canyon, the famed Mariana Trench.

The 95,000-square-mile monument includes the unique geology and rare submarine ecology generated by the collision of two of the Earth's great tectonic plates, the Pacific and Philippine plates.

This is a place where the oldest species on the planet thrive and strange, newly

discovered species push life beyond all known extremes. Here some of the greatest biodiversity known in the microbial world can be found. Nineteen species of whales and dolphins call this area home, including several species of rare beaked whales.

This is one of the few places where chemosynthetic and photosynthetic communities of life come together. Recent underwater discoveries of liquid carbon bubbling from undersea rocks, pools of boiling sulfur, monstrous mud volcanoes and other phenomena have astonished scientists who value the area as a pristine scientific laboratory.

Increasing pressure from industrial fishing, illegal pirate fishing and habitat destruction threatens this remarkable ecosystem.

Monument designation provides an opportunity to protect a diversity of oceanic habitats and preserve and protect fish populations in this area.

The Mariana Trench campaign is part of Global Ocean Legacy, a collaboration of Lyda Hill, the Oak Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Robertson Foundation and the Sandler Foundation to protect some of the world's largest and most spectacular marine habitats.