



Gooney Gazette II

Friends of Midway Atoll Newsletter



December 2012

Ecotourism ends at Midway Atoll

A \$1 million shortfall in annual budget also means no new research can begin

By William Cole- Honolulu Star Advertiser

Midway Atoll has been described as the “window” to the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument the only site open to the public within the remote island chain.

But that view is dimming with the federal budget crunch, a more than \$1 million budget shortfall and a decision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to shut down ecotourism. The agency also will allow no new research and reduce its 10-person on-island staff to five, among other cutbacks.

“It’s very frustrating for us,” said Barry Stieglitz, the service’s refuge supervisor for the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands National Wildlife Refuge Complex. “We worked very hard to get a visitor services program restored to Midway after it was inaccessible for a number of years — and then to have this happen after these wonderful (ecotourism) contractors got these tours up and running again.” Stieglitz added that “it’s hard on them and it’s hard on us because Midway is such an amazing place, and we really do want to share it with the American people that are paying for it.”



Midway Atoll National Wildlife

Refuge, whose natural history is rivaled by the legendary sea battle that was a turning point in World War II, faced budget and management problems before, operating from 2002 through 2007 without a visitor program.

The shutdown is back for the 2013 fiscal year, which started Oct. 1.

That means at least for the remainder of the fiscal year, no permit-based natural history tours; videography, journalism, photography or university visits; or Native Hawaiian practice permits, said Ann Bell, the Fish and Wildlife visitor services manager for the national monument.

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Bell said with the staff cut in half, Fish and Wildlife doesn't have oversight capability for those groups anymore.

When, or if, ecotourism or new research might return is unclear, officials said.

"It's a real loss," said Birgit Winning, whose California-based Oceanic Society made four trips to Midway with a total of 50 people earlier this year. "This was a very important opportunity to educate the public. We lost that."

The trips out to Midway were expensive, in part because an airplane had to be chartered to get there. The Oceanic Society said it cost about \$6,000 a person for the weeklong visit.

Fish and Wildlife said 332 people visited on permits during the 2012 season.

"When people address this, they say, 'Well, you only bring out so few people,' but I think the thing that's unique about Midway is that the people who come out really share it," Winning said.

"It's a very deep connection they form with that place," she said, adding, "they really become advocates for this refuge system."

One of the biggest losers in the loss of ecotourism is the Fish and Wildlife Service "because public support for their mission is so important," Winning said. "This (ecotourism) was one way to have a passionate constituency."

Nearly 3 million birds call Midway home for much of each year, including the world's largest population of Laysan albatross, or "gooney birds." Hawaiian monk seals, green sea turtles and spinner dolphins frequent Midway's blue lagoon.

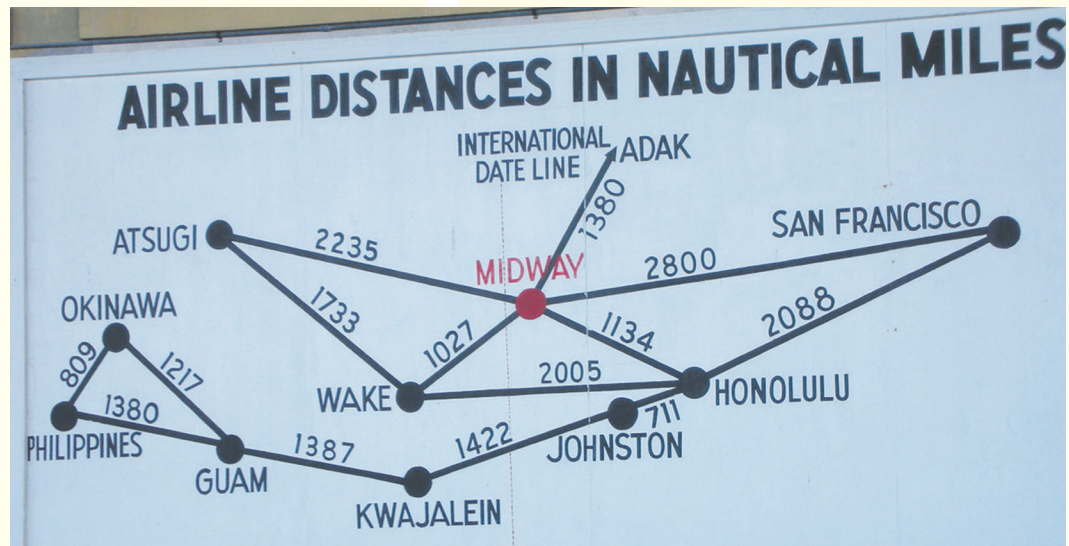
Located 1,250 miles northwest of Honolulu, Midway is one of

the oldest atoll systems in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, originating as a volcano about 27 million years ago.

It was the last link in a global telegraph system inaugurated by a message from President Theodore Roosevelt on July 4, 1903, and the atoll and its surrounding waters were the site of the famous June 4-7, 1942, battle that saw Japan lose four aircraft carriers.

Midway has about 120 often dilapidated buildings, including cable company buildings, maintenance shops, hangars, warehouses, barracks, residences, a cold storage, a theater and a gymnasium. Most were built between 1941 and 1960.

On May 20, 1996, custody of Midway Atoll was transferred from the Navy to the Department of the Interior. Fewer than 100 people now live on Midway, including Fish and Wildlife



and Federal Aviation Administration employees and contract support workers.

Midway's distance from Honolulu makes it expensive to operate as a wildlife refuge.

"The budget has simply not kept up with increases in the cost of fuel and infrastructure maintenance," Stieglitz said in August.

The Fish and Wildlife Midway budget was \$5.6 million in fiscal 2009, \$5.7 million in 2010, \$6 million in 2011 and \$6.7 million in 2012, officials said.



Marine File Photo- F/A 18 Hornet Midway on Aug. 2 after experiencing a mechanical problem. A Delta 747 with 359 passengers made an emergency stop in 2011.

The Fish and Wildlife Service said that even with the budget shortfall, the emergency landing capability will remain. Both federal agencies share operating costs on Midway.

Fish and Wildlife said it also is looking at possibly reducing the frequency of support flights and vessel traffic to the island to lower the amount of fuel purchased to save money.

There are other impacts: Officials said the reduction in staff will affect the ability to do seabird monitoring.

Fish and Wildlife used to assist the Coast Guard with emergency medical evacuations from ships at sea, sending people out in a small boat to meet a ship and bring back to Midway injured or sick individuals who would then be airlifted out on a Coast Guard C-130 aircraft. "We're not going to be able to do that (anymore)," Stieglitz said. "We don't have enough core positions left with the capability and experience to do that."

The service said it pulled in more than \$1 million from other national wildlife refuges in fiscal 2012 to help when Midway couldn't make ends meet, but that money isn't there for the 2013 year with the budget projected to be \$5.6 million.

The FAA has a separate budget and oversees Henderson Airfield, which serves as an emergency landing strip for twin-engine jetliners.

A Marine Corps F/A-18 fighter flying from Honolulu to Iwakuni, Japan, made a "precautionary" landing on



- F/A 18 Hornet landing at Midway.

New Year's To Do List. . .

Renew your FOMA Membership

Your continued support is so important to help make a difference on Midway Atoll. We thank you for your past support and contributions. They are appreciated.

Mail renewal payments to: Linda Watters
6506 SE Clackamas Road Milwaukie OR 97267
Email membership questions to: 1lh2os@comcast.net

You can also use PAYPAL for easy payment on the confirmation page at the Friends of Midway Atoll website: <http://www.friendsofmidway.org>

- Student \$10**
- Veteran \$20**
- Individual \$25**
- Family \$35**
- Contributor \$100**
- Corporate \$500**
- Life \$1,500**

Memoir of a Midway Warrior

by John F. Miniclier Colonel, USMC (Ret.)

I am proud to be a member of, “Friends of Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge”.

I was an honored guest of FWS at the 70th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle on Midway, held on the Atoll this past June. I sent Admiral Haney’s speechwriter a short description of myself and I will include part of it here. My name is Colonel John F. Miniclier, USMC (Ret), I was born 23 July 1921 in Duluth, Minnesota. I enlisted as private in the Marine Corps on 4 August 1940 and trained at boot camp in San Diego, CA.

I sailed on the USS Wharton to Midway Atoll, with a short stop in Hawaii. I arrived on Sand Island 19 September 1941, with the rank of Private First Class. This promotion resulted in a slight increase in pay from the original twenty-one dollars a month. On 7 December 1941 Japanese ships fired at the Atoll, one of the shells entered through a opening in the bomb proof decks of the power house and wounded 1st Lieutenant George H. Cannon. He died because he refused aid until his men were taken care of. He was awarded the Medal of Honor.



During May 1942 a search light position was established on top of the power plant. The position had a good view of this part of the Island. It was often visited by the Island Commander Captain Simard, USN and the 6th Defense Battalion Commanding Officer Colonel Shannon, USMC. It was also visited by Admiral C. W. Nimitz.

Left to right: Greg Schubert, Cindy Waddington, Col. Miniclier, Robert Fields, Dr. Fern Duvall and Barry Christenson, Photo credit: Peggy Miniclier.

As a search light spotter the space between the bomb proof deck and the power house became my barracks for the next month along with fellow marines. During this time, Commander John Ford, USNR, a famous movie director, lived with us Marines for ten days.

On June 4th, 1942 John was in our quarters when the Battle of Midway started and was able to film this historic battle from the power plant windows. A short distance from the power plant I was on a 30-foot wooden tower, which was the direction control for the searchlight.

I could see our airplanes take off from Eastern Island for the battle, and I could count the incoming enemy airplanes. I watched as one of the few of our airplanes returning to Eastern Island was shot down. The pilot bailed out but was then machine gunned by the enemy Zero airplane.

Cont. from page 4 Memoirs.



I departed Midway Atoll May 1943 as a Sergeant. In January 1944 I applied for the V-12 college program. I attended the University of Notre Dame and Colgate University. On 3 April, I was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant USMC and on 4 April married Margaret Creel. We are now in our 67th year of married life. I was promoted 17 August 1949 to 1st Lieutenant, 15 July 1952 to Captain, 7 January 1957 to Major. I graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1961 under an active duty degree program. I was promoted 1 July 1963 to Lieutenant Colonel and 1 October 1968 to Colonel. I retired to the temporary disabled list on 1 November 1971 with final separation 1 May 1975, after years of active duty in; Tsingtao China, Japan, the floating Battalion in the Mediterranean, Okinawa, Viet Nam and numerous cities in the USA.

There have been many highlights in my life. The most recent was being honored at the 70th Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of Midway. The wonderful people at Fish and Wildlife Service gave me eight days to visit Midway Atoll. I enjoyed each minute and was fortunate in having my daughter, Peggy as my aide.

It was a trip of a lifetime that brought back many memories. Seeing my old quarters at the power plant brought tears to my eyes, as did the commemorative ceremony. Standing on the beaches of Sand Island I was able to recall when we first dug in there and set up lines of defense. The visit to Eastern Island, where I had been stationed the first two months of 1943, was made enjoyable by the knowledgeable staff of FWS and the FOMA board members that were there sharing information and volunteering their time.

The current facilities for visitors on Sand Island were outstanding which included our quarters, the excellent food and the congeniality at the bar at Captain Brooks. Oh YES, I loved all the birds and the efforts to preserve the Atoll wildlife. But most of all I admire and pray for the people connected with FWS and those who support the cause for Midway and their future goals to keep the Atoll vibrant and alive.

ALOHA, for now. **John F. Miniclier** Colonel, USMC (Ret.)

Innovative Spaces in Far away Places by Darlene Moegerle

Perhaps you are familiar with the unique style of the Officer's Houses on Midway Atoll. Did you know that the houses and some of the industrial buildings, including the seaplane hangar were designed by renowned architect, Albert Kahn? He was born in Prussia in 1869 and came to America with his parents in 1880. Mr. Kahn died in December 1942, not long after designing the Midway buildings.



Albert became interested in architecture at an early age and was just 26 years old when he founded his own architectural firm in Detroit. Always an innovator, his greatest contribution to modern building practices was the use of reinforced concrete for the construction of large buildings. This was a revolutionary concept as it allowed industrial buildings to have large open spaces without the need for internal supports. It also allowed for more windows, better ventilation and improved lighting.

Another huge benefit of concrete construction was the safety inherent in the buildings. In the typical wooden factories and warehouses of the time, devastating fires were frequent and resulted in huge losses in lives and property. Kahn was perfectly positioned in Detroit as the automobile industry developed. The large unobstructed space was ideal for this type of manufacturing. The Packard Company was the first automobile company to contract with Kahn to build a new factory in 1903. Henry Ford, who was developing the idea of the assembly line, soon became interested in the new building design which would provide large areas for the stockpiling of parts and supplies at the place where they were needed. In 1917, Kahn designed a huge automobile plant for Ford that was over half mile long! That same plant was also used to mass manufacture the B-24 Liberator Bombers, that were so important in the European war effort.

Kahn became known as the foremost American industrial architect of his time. According to the company website, "By 1938, Kahn's firm was responsible for 20 percent of all architect-designed factories in the U.S."

It is easy to see why the government contracted with Kahn to design some of the workshop buildings on Midway. Large, open buildings were needed to house the shops, and industrial buildings and the large seaplane hangar. Also, with the possibility of air attack, the reinforced concrete buildings were much safer. It is unknown just how many of the trade buildings on Midway were designed by Kahn. Certainly many of the buildings were constructed using his reinforced concrete design.



Seaplane Hangar: Originally twice its size, it was shelled during the December 7, 1941, raid and was set afire by Japanese air attack on June 4, 1942. Only half of the original hangar was rebuilt. Photo credits USFWS.

What is known is that the nine senior officer’s homes and the Commodore’s house on Midway were designed by Kahn or his firm in 1941. The distinctive “port holes” on the porches were a feature of the homes and are a trademark of Albert Kahn. The homes are substantial, yet simple in design. The large rooms with high ceilings and ample windows took advantage of the breezes that waft across the atoll.

Recently the homes received some upgrades such as new electrical service, plumbing and windows. This was the first major work done on the buildings since they were constructed in 1941. Kahn was a creative thinker and the designer of many unique buildings from homes to huge factories to large greenhouse conservatories, many of which are still in use today. While many of his buildings are spectacular, I prefer to think of him as the designer of the simple square, two-story houses that were the homes of many families that have enjoyed their lives on Midway Atoll.



Midway House – Officer in Charge House: Built in 1941, designed by Albert Kahn, now serves as the Refuge Manager’s house. In 1969, President Nixon hosted a secret meeting with Republic of South Vietnam President Thieu in the downstairs room. These negotiations started the process for the United States to sharply reduce U.S. troop levels in an effort to turn the war effort over to the South Vietnamese. Photo credit USFWS.



US President Richard Nixon and South Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu conducted secret meetings on Sand Island in the Midway House—the Commanding Officer’s residence. June 8, 1969

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Notice of FOMA Board and Annual Meetings

FOMA's Annual Meeting will be held by telephone just prior to the January 16 th regular Board meeting at 4 pm Eastern Standard Time (11am Hawaii Time). If you are interested in participating please email Avery Loy at averyloy@gmail.com, or call 503-330-1640 for details.

Most of FOMA's Board of Directors will be meeting in Honolulu on December 10th and 11th. They plan to meet with staff from Midway Atoll, Honolulu and the Region and discuss ways FOMA may be able to help in the budget issues affecting the elimination of the visitor program, and to develop a future strategic plan for FOMA.

Be sure and check out our Facebook page at Friends of Midway Atoll NWR, and watch for our new updated website at friendsofmidway.org.

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