

FY16 Accomplishments

BACKGROUND

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1975 as the first national marine sanctuary to protect the wreck site of the USS *Monitor*. The *Monitor* was the prototype for a class of U.S. Civil War ironclad, turreted warships that significantly altered both naval technology and marine architecture in the nineteenth century. The sanctuary protects the wreck for future generations and works to share this iconic vessel's historical and cultural legacy with the public.

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary is part of the National Marine Sanctuary System, which is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. National marine sanctuaries are managed for the conservation of their natural and cultural resources, while supporting sustainable recreation, tourism and compatible commercial activities. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.





Photo: NOAA

Five scoping meetings were held in North Carolina and Washington, DC to inform the public on the proposed expansion and allow public comments.



Image courtesy of David Sybert, UNC Coastal Studies Institute - Battle of the Atlantic Expedition

A Project Baseline submersible is hoisted aboard R/V *Baseline Explorer* after resurfacing from a dive.

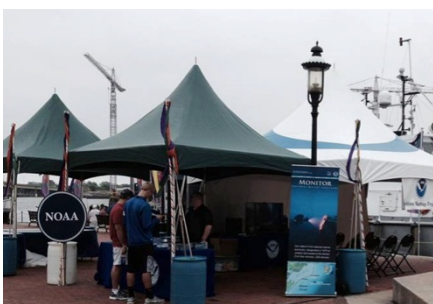


Photo: Shannon Ricles, NOAA

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary participated in the Norfolk Harborfest, the largest, longest-running, free maritime festival.

Proposed sanctuary expansion

For more than 40 years, Monitor National Marine Sanctuary has served as a special place honoring the iconic Civil War ironclad, USS *Monitor*, and the memory and service of Civil War sailors. The proposed expansion, announced in January 2016, is an opportunity to honor another generation of mariners that helped defend the nation during both World Wars. An expansion of this historical site just off North Carolina's coast would protect a collection of historically significant shipwrecked vessels, including vessels sunk during World War II's Battle of the Atlantic, and would present an opportunity to expand dive tourism.

Exploring remains of WWII shipwreck

Utilizing cutting-edge technologies, including manned submersibles, 3D laser scans and photogrammetry, Monitor National Marine Sanctuary explored the remains of two World War II shipwrecks discovered by NOAA in 2014. The German submarine, U-576, and its victim, the SS *Bluefields*, located in about 750 feet of water, were seen for the first time in 74 years. The data collected will be used to visualize and virtually recreate the underwater battlefield, enabling NOAA to interpret our nation's rich maritime legacy and to better protect these important historic resources.

Outreach and new partnerships

In an effort to connect with new constituents and form strong partnerships, Monitor National Marine Sanctuary partnered with a wide variety of organizations in 2016 through community festivals, museums and schools. From HarborFest to Pridefest, from National Park Service Centennial celebrations to forging new partnerships with local school districts and museums, MNMS connected with hundreds of thousands of people across North Carolina, Virginia, New York, and beyond. Outreach is imperative to reach new audiences and to share NOAA's mission.

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary Looking Ahead to FY17

- NOAA will continue boundary review of the sanctuary to protect and promote historic shipwrecks off North Carolina's coast. This proposed expansion will further enable NOAA to honor the sacrifices of the thousands of sailors, marines, coast guard members and merchant mariners who were lost and preserve North Carolina's maritime heritage.
- In partnership with NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, the sanctuary will continue mapping hard-bottom areas to gain a better understanding of important fish habitat, which is critical to commercial and recreational fishing.
- The sanctuary and its partner, The Mariners' Museum, will host "Treasures of NOAA's Ark." This 10,000-square foot traveling exhibit highlights over 200 years of history, showing how the evolution of past ocean agencies became NOAA of today.