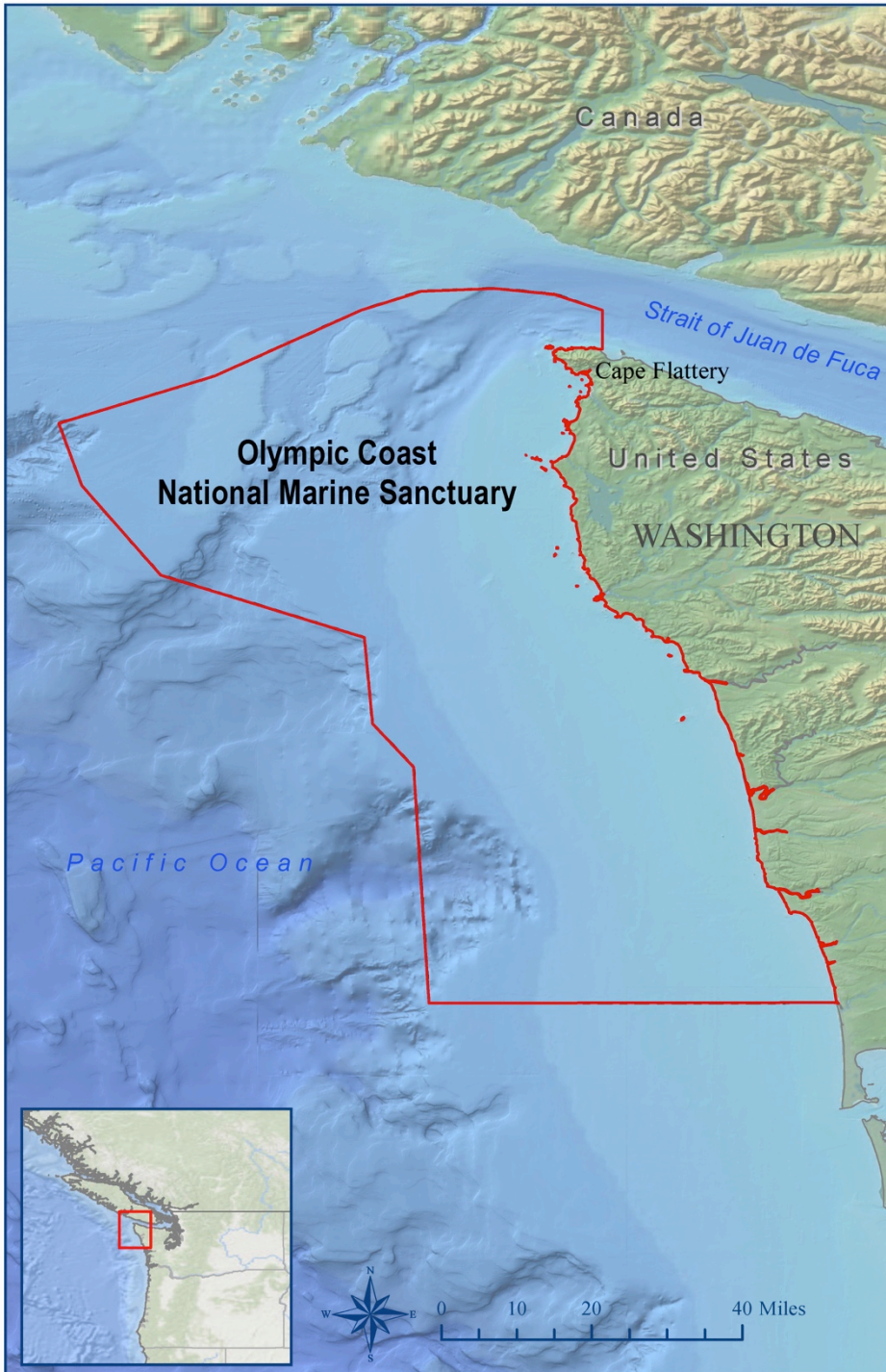


FY16 Accomplishments



BACKGROUND

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1994 to protect and preserve a productive upwelling zone - home to marine mammals and seabirds. Along its shores are thriving kelp and intertidal communities, teeming with fishes and other sea life. In the darkness of the seafloor, scattered communities of deep-sea coral and sponges form habitats for fish and other important marine wildlife.

Olympic Coast 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.



East meets west: New England Aquarium features Olympic Coast and Stellwagen Bank in new exhibit

An exciting new exhibit highlighting marine life found in the shallower tidepools and kelp forests of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary opened at New England Aquarium this year. The exhibit allows aquarium visitors to see the vast diversity of life found in national marine sanctuaries, including the local Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. New England Aquarium is one of the premier visitor attractions in Boston, with over 1.3 million visitors a year. Information about the exhibit and Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary is also featured on the New England Aquarium website at <http://www.neaq.org/exhibit/olympic-coast-exhibit/>.



Photo: New England Aquarium

Young visitors at New England Aquarium observe a giant Pacific octopus in the Olympic Coast exhibit.

Dramatic seascapes and science engage student explorers

A NOAA-led survey of Quinault Canyon on the R/V Rainier gathered detailed seafloor imagery and water column data to better understand this rarely visited underwater canyon. Surveys revealed rocky outcrops along the canyon rim and a remarkable number of methane plumes in the area. Sanctuary educators work with scientists to engage youth in deep-sea research using Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV) and ship-to-shore activities. Hands-on experiential ROV education encourages the next generation of ocean explorers to consider education opportunities in science, technology, engineering and math.

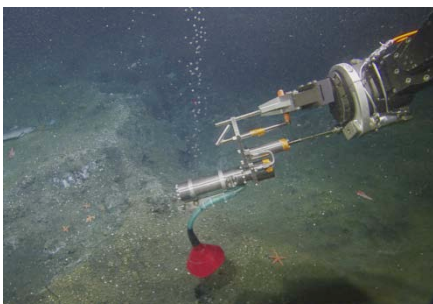


Photo: OET/Nautilus Live

ROV *Hercules* uses the gas-tight sampler to collect samples.

Creating a sentinel site for ocean acidification

Changing water chemistry or ocean acidification, has profound implications for Washington's marine resources, threatening coastal economies, communities and the quality of life. The sanctuary is working with partners to create a sentinel site for ocean acidification. The collaborative group will continue to share information on conditions of and threats to natural and cultural resources. Focusing on a coordinated strategy for science, education, awareness, public engagement, and resource management, a sentinel site will develop early warning capabilities regarding ocean acidification and its effect on Olympic Coast and inland waters.



Photo: NOAA

Pteropods, a type of marine snail, show the first evidence of shell dissolution along the U.S. West Coast.

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Looking Ahead to FY17

- The sanctuary will host the first Olympic Coast Marine Advanced Technology and Education (MATE) underwater robot competition, bringing together Olympic Peninsula students to learn about the technology and challenges scientists face in ocean research.
- Big Mama - a life-sized, walk-in inflatable humpback whale will make her debut at coastal schools and events. Modeled after a whale known for her strong maternal nature, the traveling exhibit will feature hands-on activities advancing ocean literacy and coastal stewardship.
- Sanctuary staff will work with partners to develop the specific components of a sentinel site for ocean acidification. Staff will collaboratively increase research and monitoring programs to address critical information gaps, and expand education and outreach programs.