

Partnerships in the National Marine Sanctuary Program

This document presents results of a comprehensive survey of existing partnerships in the NMSP, and illustrates the diversity, comprehensiveness, importance of, and the essential role that partnerships play in the success of the management of the oceans resources

The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) serves as the trustee for a system of 13 sanctuaries and one coral reef ecosystem reserve, encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters.

Building Partnerships for More than 30 Years

From its inception more than 30 years ago, the NMSP recognized that it could better serve the American public by partnering with agencies and organizations at the local, state, and national level to fulfill its mission to protect and manage our nation's marine sanctuaries. Partnering has become a "way of doing business" and is integrated at all levels of NMSP activities. From working with local schools teaching young students about the wonders of the sea, to coordinating enforcement activities with state and federal agencies to protecting sanctuary resources, partnerships have allowed the program to achieve broader goals, harness the expertise and experience of renowned scientists and scholars, and further research, monitoring, education, outreach and enforcement within the sanctuaries.

Systematic Survey Documents Scale and Scope of NMSP Partnerships

This assessment of partnerships across the sanctuary system indicated that more than 409 separate partners are involved in as many as 385 different partnerships. Note: Some partners are involved in more than one partnership. These numbers are conservative, and do not reflect some of the small event-driven partnerships with individual businesses or local schools. In addition, partnerships with other NOAA programs were not included.

An Exceptional Diversity of Partners Drive Program Success

An analysis of the program's partner institutions shows that the majority of partners are governmental agencies at the local (cities, counties, and districts), state, and federal level (see Figure 1). In addition, the program collaborates with more than 68 not-for-profit organizations, including university consortiums, local fishermen and environmental groups, as well as national organizations such as the American Zoo and Aquarium Association. The marine sanctuaries work with more than 39 aquaria, museums

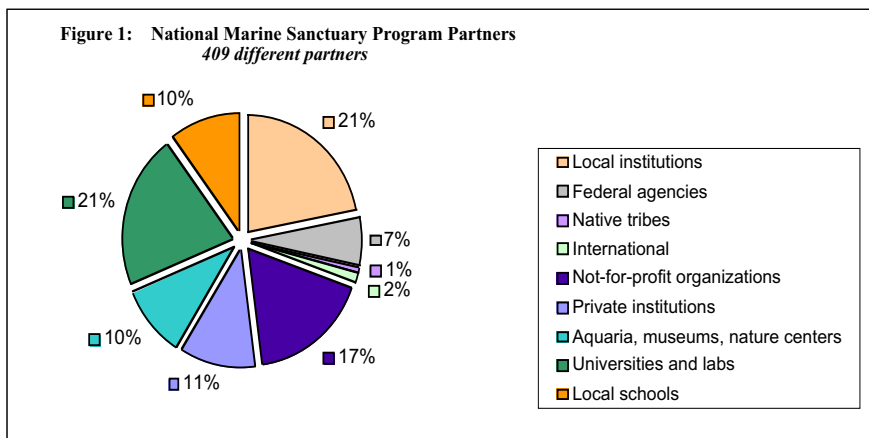
and nature centers across the country to increase the public's understanding of marine stewardship issues. The program relies heavily on universities for education and research activities and advice on management issues. To ensure our children are ready to become the future stewards of our nation's marine environment, each national sanctuary works directly with the local schools to promote K-12 environmental sciences.



Fluke of Humpback Whale.
Photo: HIHWNMS/NOAA
Fisheries Permit #782-1438



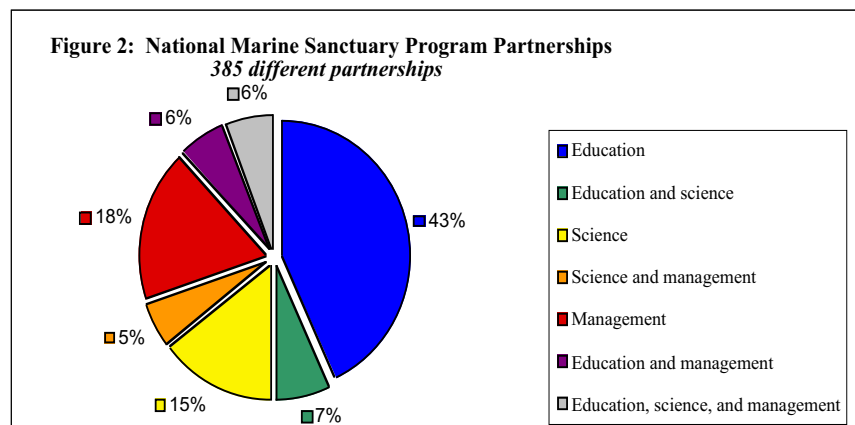
Diver holding ROV for live broadcast from GRNMS
Photo: Greg McFall



Most Partnerships Target Education, Management and Science Activities

As shown in Figure 2, the large majority of partnerships assist the sanctuaries in raising the public's awareness on marine sanctuary issues. Such partnerships take the form of developing exhibits in aquaria or nature centers, and working with teacher associations and local schools to develop hands-on educational material.

Sanctuaries also involve their local and state community in the management of sanctuary resources, both natural and cultural. In fact, about a fourth of the partnerships assist the program in its management mandate. For instance, the regulations for the Thunder



Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve established a cooperative management model for the sanctuary with the State of Michigan. Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary works with a group composed of three native tribes, Washington State's Department of Fish and Wildlife, and other federal agencies to coordinate oil spill prevention through ensuring adequate training, logistics, and discussing critical policy issues surrounding oil spills.

Sustained Partnerships Validate the NMSP Approach

Partners provide critical services to the sanctuaries in their management activities, ensuring that the sanctuaries are better stewards of these underwater treasures. Such partnerships also allow for better community involvement, engaging them in sanctuary and ocean conservation, and ensuring their voices are heard and taken into account.

The best judge of the quality of partnerships is to look at whether they survive the test of time. In that respect, the NMSP has shown itself to be a reliable partner. Sometimes, partnerships preceded the designation of the a sanctuary, as with the 20-year-old long-term monitoring of the Flower Garden Banks conducted by Interior Department's Minerals Management Service. These long-standing partnerships continue to lead critical assistance to the program in reaching the goals set by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to:

- 1) improve the conservation, understanding, management, and wise and sustainable use of marine resources,
- 2) enhance public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the marine environment, and
- 3) maintain for future generations the habitat, and ecological services, of the natural assemblage of living resources that inhabit these areas.

Partnering is the "sanctuary way." It is a win-win situation for everyone involved. The NMSP has grown to rely on its partners to provide critical services that continue to lead to the success of the marine sanctuaries. It is by engaging the community the program serves, and by working in close collaboration with outside organizations with common missions and goals, that the program can be fully successful in protecting these special places.