



OUR NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES



STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2015



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NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY PROGRAM



NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES



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P R E F A C E

THIS STRATEGIC PLAN *has been designed for the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) through the year 2015. The vision, mission, goals, objectives, and program performance measures of the NMSP outlined in this document are established under the mandate of, and in accord with, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA). With the experience of over three decades of resource protection and management, through science, education, outreach, exploration, and stewardship, the NMSP has produced this strategic plan. It is intended to describe and define how the NMSP is moving forward in addressing the requirements of the NMSA to comprehensively protect and manage the resources within national marine sanctuaries.*

This plan serves as a bridge between the broad programmatic mandates contained in the NMSA and the daily operations as outlined in management plans and annual operating plans. The plan was prepared with a ten-year horizon, which was considered a short enough time span to be able to develop realistic goals and objectives, while simultaneously being long enough to mirror long-term program performance measures and encompass multiple reauthorizations of the NMSA and five-year management plan reviews. As with any strategic plan this plan will be periodically updated as necessary.

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AGENCY LINKAGES

The NMSP is contained within and coordinates closely with the National Ocean Service (NOS), and its parent organization, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), within the Department of Commerce. The NMSP's goals and objectives are aligned to mesh with the goals and priorities of both NOAA and NOS.

NOAA's strategic plan for FY05 to FY10 (*New Priorities for the 21st Century*) outlines four mission goals and five cross-cutting priorities. The NMSP falls under the first mission goal: Protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management. The NMSP also clearly supports five of the six cross-cutting priorities:

- *Developing, valuing, and sustaining a world-class workforce*
- *Integrating global environmental observations and data management;*
- *Ensuring sound, state-of-the-art research;*
- *Promoting environmental literacy; and*
- *Exercising international leadership.*

NOS's strategic plan mirrors that of NOAA, including the mission goal and cross-cutting priorities.

OTHER LINKAGES

The vision, mission, goals, objectives, and program performance measures of the NMSP outlined in this document are all derived from the NMSA. Since the broad legislative language of the NMSA does not lend itself to the clarity and detail needed for a strategic plan, the NMSP developed its goals to mirror the nine mandates in section 301 of the NMSA as shown in Table 1. The program performance measures were developed to cover all of the seven goals, as described and shown in Table 2 later in this document.

OPERATING, RESOURCE, AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

To be successful, an organizations such as the NMSP must operate in a dynamic environment recognizing and working within its setting, responding to changing times and circumstances. By virtue of its mandates to conserve, protect, manage, and maintain complex ecosystems and resources, and enhance public awareness and understanding, the NMSP must constantly adapt in order to proactively meet the needs of its lively operating, resource, and social environments. These environments are described in more detail in Appendix 1 to this plan.

RESPONSE TO RECENT OCEAN RECOMMENDATIONS

As the only fully federal marine protected area management program, the NMSP is in a unique position to respond to the challenges and recommendations laid out by the recently released reports of both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Ocean Commission. Both reports encourage the use of an ecosystem-based approach to ocean management, which is one of the hallmarks of the NMSP. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy further recommends that national goals and guidelines should be developed, leading to a uniform process for the effective design, implementation, and evaluation of marine protected areas, and that marine protected areas should be considered in the protection and management of coral reefs. The Pew Ocean Commission suggests that U.S. waters should be comprehensively zoned, including provisions for marine protected areas, and that a national system of marine reserves should be established. Both commissions recognize the need for furthering public education about ocean resources. In addition, the President recently issued the U.S. Ocean Action Plan in response to the report by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. A number of the activities outlined in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan relate directly to the NMSP, among them protecting the Northwestern Hawaiian Island Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, forming new international partnerships to enhance management of coral reefs, better coordinating and integrating the existing network of marine managed areas, adopting an ocean parks strategy, and interpreting Great Lakes maritime heritage.

CONCLUSION

The NMSP exists as part of the nation's rich legacy of conservation, complementing the U.S.'s heritage of protecting special areas on land and echoing this terrestrial management in the nation's seas. The NMSP brings an ecosystem approach to marine management, asking Americans to adopt a new ethic of marine stewardship. Aldo Leopold, one of America's greatest land conservators, wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." The NMSP seeks to translate that ethic from land to sea, and is dedicated to preserving the integrity, stability and beauty of the nation's national marine sanctuaries.

Table 1: Correlation of NMSA Purposes and Policies with Strategic Plan Goals

		Goal						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>NMSA Purposes and Policies</i>		Protect Resources	Strengthen the System	Raise Awareness	Sanctuary Science	Facilitate Compatible Use	Improve Internat'l Work	Build Infrastructure
1	to identify and designate as national marine sanctuaries areas of the marine environment which are of special national significance and to manage these areas as the National Marine Sanctuary System;	✓	✓					✓
2	to provide authority for comprehensive and coordinated conservation and management of these marine areas, and activities affecting them, in a manner which complements existing regulatory authorities;	✓						
3	to maintain the natural biological communities in the national marine sanctuaries, and to protect, and, where appropriate, restore and enhance natural habitats, populations, and ecological processes;	✓						
4	to enhance public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and wise and sustainable use of the marine environment, and the natural, historical, cultural, and archeological resources of the National Marine Sanctuary System;			✓				
5	to support, promote, and coordinate scientific research on, and long-term monitoring of, the resources of these marine areas;				✓			
6	to facilitate to the extent compatible with the primary objective of resource protection, all public and private uses of the resources of these marine areas not prohibited pursuant to other authorities;					✓		
7	to develop and implement coordinated plans for the protection and management of these areas with appropriate Federal agencies, State and local governments, Native American tribes and organizations, international organizations, and other public and private interests concerned with the continuing health and resilience of these marine areas;	✓						
8	to create models of, and incentives for, ways to conserve and manage these areas, including the application of innovative management techniques; and	✓	✓					
9	to cooperate with global programs encouraging conservation of marine resources.		✓				✓	

VISION

The National Marine Sanctuary Program is a world-class system of sanctuaries that protect the nation's natural and cultural marine resources for this and future generations and provides both national and international leadership for marine conservation.

MISSION

Identify, protect, conserve, and enhance the natural and cultural resources, values, and qualities of the National Marine Sanctuary System for this and future generations throughout the nation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The NMSA provides the broad mandates, purposes, and policies for the NMSP. Sanctuary management plans and annual operating plans spell out more specific and detailed tasks for day-to-day management at a site and throughout the overall program. The following goals and objectives provide a bridge between broad mandates and daily operations, encompassing the nine purposes and policies in the act and the functional categories for annual operating plans.

Goal 1: Identify, designate, and manage sanctuaries to maintain the natural biological communities in sanctuaries and to protect and, where appropriate, restore and enhance natural habitats, populations, and ecological processes, through innovative, coordinated, and community-based measures and techniques.

- **Objective 1: Prepare sanctuary-specific management plans and regional and national programs and policies that utilize all program capacities to protect and manage resources.**
- **Objective 2: Conduct and maintain routine contingency planning, emergency response, damage assessment, and restoration activities to preserve and restore the integrity of sanctuary ecosystems.**
- **Objective 3: Develop and maintain enforcement programs and partnerships to maximize protection of sanctuary resources.**
- **Objective 4: Review and evaluate the NMSP's effectiveness at site, regional, and national levels, through both internal and external mechanisms.**
- **Objective 5: Anticipate, characterize, prevent and mitigate threats to resources.**
- **Objective 6: Assess and predict changes in the NMSP's operating, natural, and social environments and evolve sanctuary management strategies to address them, through management plan reviews, reauthorizations, and program regulatory review.**
- **Objective 7: Designate new sanctuaries, as appropriate, to ensure the nation's marine ecosystems and networks achieve national expectations for sustainability.**

Goal 2: Build and strengthen the nation-wide system of marine sanctuaries, maintain and enhance the role of the NMSP's system in larger marine protected area networks, and help provide both national and international leadership for marine protected area management and marine resource stewardship.

- **Objective 1: Develop an ecosystem-based context in which sanctuaries exist to facilitate identification of potential new sites, in coordination, to the most practical extent, with community, regional, national, and international efforts.**
 - **Objective 2: Initiate, coordinate and participate in ecosystem-based and network initiatives and projects at the regional, national, and international levels.**
 - **Objective 3: Develop and maintain interagency partnerships and collaborations, particularly with other national and international protected area and resource managers.**
-

Goal 3: Enhance nation-wide public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of marine and Great Lakes ecosystems and maritime heritage resources through outreach, education, and interpretation efforts.

- **Objective 1: Provide formal and informal education opportunities that will reach a diverse national population and enhance knowledge of the oceans and Great Lakes, their resources, and the stewardship responsibilities of all citizens.**
 - **Objective 2: Implement outreach programs to increase awareness of, personal connections with, and stewardship of the oceans and Great Lakes, and national marine sanctuaries.**
 - **Objective 3: Establish partnerships and interpretive facilities in key locations that maximize community exposure, to supplement the NMSP's education and outreach efforts.**
-

Goal 4: Investigate and enhance the understanding of ecosystem processes through continued scientific research, monitoring, and characterization to support ecosystem-based management in sanctuaries and throughout U.S. waters.

- **Objective 1: Expand observing systems and monitoring efforts within and near national marine sanctuaries to fill important gaps in the knowledge and understanding of ocean and Great Lakes ecosystems.**
- **Objective 2: Support directed research activities that support management decisionmaking on challenges and opportunities facing sanctuary ecosystems, processes, and resources.**
- **Objective 3: Develop comprehensive characterization products of ocean and Great Lakes ecosystems, processes, and resources.**

Goal 5: Facilitate human use in sanctuaries to the extent such uses are compatible with the primary mandate of resource protection, through innovative public participation and interagency cooperative arrangements.

- **Objective 1: Work closely with partners, interested parties, community members, stakeholders, and government agencies to assess and manage human use of sanctuary resources.**
 - **Objective 2: Create, operate, and support community-based sanctuary advisory councils to advise sites and the overall program in the management of their resources, and to serve as liaisons to the community.**
 - **Objective 3: Consult and coordinate with federal agencies and other partners conducting activities in or near sanctuaries.**
 - **Objective 4: Use other tools such as policy development, permitting, and regulatory review and improvement to help guide human use of sanctuary resources.**
 - **Objective 5: Create and support programs and strategies to work with indigenous peoples and treaty tribes.**
-

Goal 6: Work with the international community to strengthen global protection of marine resources, investigate and employ appropriate new management approaches, and disseminate NMSP experience and techniques.

- **Objective 1: Develop multilateral program relationships to interact with, share knowledge and experience with, and learn from international partners to improve the NMSP's management capacity, and bring new experiences to marine protected area management in the U.S.**
 - **Objective 2: Investigate the use of international legal conventions and other instruments to help protect sanctuary resources, including those that are transboundary or shared.**
 - **Objective 3: Cooperate to the extent possible with global research initiatives in order to improve the overall understanding of the ocean.**
 - **Objective 4: Make NMSP education and awareness programs accessible through international efforts to increase the global population's awareness of ocean issues.**
-

Goal 7: Build, maintain, and enhance an operational capability and infrastructure that efficiently and effectively support the attainment of the NMSP's mission and goals.

- **Objective 1: Cultivate, retain, and enhance a highly qualified and dedicated staff for the NMSP.**
- **Objective 2: Implement a regional management structure to integrate marine sanctuaries into region-based ecosystem frameworks for the NMSP.**
- **Objective 3: Support and expand the volunteer programs within the NMSP to support a multitude of sanctuary operations to magnify the capabilities of the NMSP, as well as public awareness of marine sanctuaries and the resources they protect.**
- **Objective 4: Build, maintain, and enhance the facilities, small boat fleet, aircraft, equipment, and other infrastructure appropriate and required for conducting operations at headquarters, the regions, and individual sanctuaries.**

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

To assess progress towards achievement of the goals and objectives identified above the NMSP has developed a set of program-wide performance measures. Taken collectively, these targets allow the NMSP to measure its management performance within the context of mandates set forth in the NMSA as well as the twenty functional categories identified in annual operating plans. Table 2 shows how the performance measures cover the seven goals. Results from performance evaluations will be used as an internal guide for the program's management decision making.

Table 2: Integration of NMSP Goals and Program Performance Measures

<i>Performance Measure</i>		Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6	Goal 7
		<i>Protect Resources</i>	<i>Strengthen the System</i>	<i>Raise Awareness</i>	<i>Sanctuary Science</i>	<i>Facilitate Compatible Use</i>	<i>Improve Internal Work</i>	<i>Build Infrastructure</i>
1	Number of sites in which water quality , based on long-term monitoring data, is being maintained or improved.*	√	√		√			
2	Number of sites in which habitat , based on long-term monitoring data, is being maintained or improved.*	√	√		√			
3	Number of sites in which select living marine resources , based on long-term monitoring data, are being maintained or improved.*	√	√		√			
4	By 2010, 100% of the System is adequately characterized .*		√		√			
5	By 2015, 1200 additional shipwrecks identified and evaluated within national marine sanctuaries demonstrating historic potential for the existence of shipwrecks.*	√		√	√			
6	By 2007, 100% of NMSP permits are handled timely and correctly.*	√	√		√	√		
7	By 2010, 100% of sites with marine zones in place have implemented a methodology for assessing their effectiveness.	√			√	√		
8	By 2010, all sites have implemented a cooperative enforcement program and are able to demonstrate results based on stated goals and objectives.	√	√	√	√	√		
9	By 2010, increase by 25% the number of volunteer hours dedicated to NMSP science, public awareness and resource protection activities.	√		√	√	√		
10	By 2010, all education programs implemented in national marine sanctuaries will be assessed for effectiveness against stated program goals and objectives and National Science Education Standards.	√		√	√	√		
11	By 2007, the NMSP is assessing the effectiveness of all significant partnerships across the sanctuary system.	√	√	√	√	√	√	

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12	By 2015, increase by 20% public awareness of national marine sanctuaries and the sanctuary system.	✓		✓		✓		
13	Complete final management plans for all sites currently in management plan review by 2008.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
14	By 2010, decrease the average length of time to complete a draft revised management plan to 24 months.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
15	By 2010, Sanctuary Advisory Councils will provide significant input on 150 priority projects across the NMSP.	✓		✓	✓	✓		
16	By 2015, all infrastructure needs are funded to adequately support safe and effective operations .	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
17	By 2010, five new collaborative projects with either new or existing international partnerships will be initiated and demonstrating protection of the marine environment.	✓		✓	✓		✓	
18	By 2006, all national marine sanctuaries (excluding Monitor NMS) will be trained in the use of Sanctuaries Hazardous Incident Emergency Logistics Database System SHIELDS and its components.	✓	✓		✓			✓
19	By 2010, 100% of sanctuaries will have an ocean observing system component within their site monitoring program.	✓	✓		✓			✓

APPENDIX 1: THE NMSP CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

To be successful, an organization as dynamic as the NMSP must recognize and work within its environment, responding to changing times and circumstances. By virtue of its mandates to conserve, protect, manage, and maintain complex ecosystems and resources, and enhance public awareness and understanding, the NMSP must constantly adapt in order to proactively meet the needs of its lively operating, resource, and social environments.

RESOURCE ENVIRONMENT

The ecosystems and resources of the marine and Great Lakes regions of the nation's waters are diverse, dynamic, and complex. Sanctuaries encompass many natural resources in the ocean environment, including the seabed and water column, marine plants, benthic organisms and marine invertebrates, fish, marine reptiles, birds, and marine mammals. Cultural, historic, and archaeological resources protected by sanctuaries include everything from shipwrecks to paleontological remains to submerged coastal villages, as well as the rich cultural heritage of coastal communities, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders. All these factors provide the extraordinary resource context for sanctuary operations.

It is, however, a context that also includes environmental change and degradation. As the 21st century progresses, the pressures on ecosystems are growing and as a result, the quality of these ecosystems continues to decline. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy has recently reported on the waning conditions of the ocean as a result of “human undermining” of marine resources:

- *Degraded waters characterized by excess nutrients, concentrations of other contaminants in the water and sediment, and harmful algal blooms;*
- *Compromised resources, including fishery declines, presence of invasive species, and coastal habitat loss; and*
- *Human-nature conflicts, including coastal population growth and attendant development pressures, climate change, and impacts of natural hazards.*

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The social context of the NMSP is no less complicated than its resource context. The changing demographics of the coastal zone include a growing, increasingly diverse, and highly demanding population; high concentrations of people in smaller areas (52% of the U.S. population in 25% of its land area); and increasing development (19 million homes and countless businesses added in the last 30 years). The ocean and coastal assets of the nation are worth, according to the report from the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, hundreds of billions of dollars, including ports and vessel traffic, coastal recreation and tourism, and fisheries.

Americans live in a world experiencing rapid cultural and social change characterized by increased access to information; advances in and increasing reliance on science and technology; increasing competition among scientific, economic, and environmental interests; and increasing globalization and interests in international matters and opportunities. Structure for ocean governance and institutional roles are becoming more intricate, with overlapping and shared jurisdiction at the national, state, territorial, tribal, regional, and local levels, and sometimes competing mandates among agencies at all levels.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The NMSP has numerous tools and authorities provided by and derived from the NMSA, which are the mechanisms through which the NMSP conducts its operations. These capacities include:

MANAGEMENT

The primary mandate of the NMSP is resource protection. The program protects sanctuary resources through an ecosystem-based, transparent, and public participatory management approach. This approach is articulated and implemented through various legal and policy instruments.

- **Legislation and Regulations** – The NMSA authorizes the NMSP to designate and manage sanctuaries, and promulgate sanctuary regulations to protect sanctuary resources.
- **Enforcement** – Comprehensive sanctuary enforcement plans, including monitoring and patrolling, ensure that activities occurring in sanctuary waters are consistent with sanctuary regulations.
- **Permits and Consultations** – The permitting system provides guidance and protocols for managers to allow individuals to conduct certain activities that would otherwise be prohibited by sanctuary regulations. The consultation system requires Federal agencies to consult with sanctuary managers when planning activities that are likely to impact sanctuary resources. Both systems allow managers to modify activities being conducted to eliminate or minimize impacts to sanctuary resources and to track and monitor these activities.
- **Management Plans** – These guiding documents for sanctuary operations include action plans, environmental impact analyses, and performance measures used for program evaluation.
- **Marine Zoning** – This tool enables the sites to provide customized protection of distinct areas within sanctuaries and helps manage conflicting uses.
- **Policy Development** – Policy development guides how sanctuaries respond to resource and user issues.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Great emphasis is placed on extensive and meaningful community involvement in sanctuary decisionmaking processes, such as management plan reviews. The NMSP considers such community involvement efforts as sanctuary advisory councils and volunteer programs to be a hallmark of the program.

- **Sanctuary Advisory Councils** – Through the establishment and operation of these community-based councils, sanctuary managers gain valuable input, advice, and feedback from individuals and other interested parties from the community.
- **Volunteer Programs** – Volunteers help sanctuaries to protect sanctuary resources through a variety of roles such as monitoring, education, and enforcement. To enhance the value of their volunteers, sanctuaries provide training, guidance, and appreciation.

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND INTERPRETATION

Sanctuaries provide and interpret information to a wide range of audiences in order to enhance the public's awareness of, understanding of, appreciation for, and desire to protect sanctuary resources and the larger marine environment.

SCIENCE

Marine resource managers, including sanctuary superintendents, must make difficult decisions, often with little existing information. The science programs of the NMSP help gather, analyze, synthesize, and share data, information, and knowledge to improve the basis upon which resource decisions are made and so enhance protection of sanctuary resources.

- **Characterization** – Assessment involves identifying and characterizing the natural and cultural resources of interest, preferably as early as possible in the process of designing a protected area and adopting the implementing regulations. Establishing a baseline of the status of resources is critical to later evaluation of the impacts of natural events and human activities, and the effectiveness of management strategies.
- **Monitoring** – Monitoring of the status (often called condition, or sometimes, inappropriately, health) of sanctuary resources allows managers to detect trends that may direct or reflect on management efforts. Process studies, modeling, and prediction, though primarily research activities, contribute to monitoring by identifying reliable indicators of environmental quality that become part of and improve the monitoring program itself.
- **Research** – Process studies allow greater understanding of ecosystem function and the relationships between sanctuary resources and the factors that control their condition and cause observed changes. These relationships can be clarified and more readily assist management if modeling efforts are undertaken, ultimately endowing resource managers with prediction capabilities that facilitate preventive action or purposeful restoration efforts.

OPERATIONS

The ability to protect sanctuary resources resides in the day-to-day operations of the NMSP: in the expertise and experience of staff hired to do their jobs, in the presence of staff in offices and on boats on the water, in the physical and virtual networks of communication and coordination built by staff, and in the relationships with other agencies and organizations who share the NMSP's mission and jurisdiction.

- **Personnel** – The hiring, training, and retention of a dedicated and capable staff provides the foundation for all the operations and accomplishments of the NMSP.
- **Partnerships** – Ongoing relationships with federal agencies, state and local governments, Native American tribes and organizations, international organizations, academic institutions, local stakeholders, and other interested parties are important elements of NMSP operation. Partnerships allow sanctuaries to make more comprehensive decisions; provide essential tools for meeting sanctuary needs; maximize resources; avoid duplication of effort; and find synergies that benefit all parties.
- **Infrastructure** – Facilities planning, procurement, and maintenance are essential to the evolution of the NMSP. The program maintains a small boat program; vessels; aircraft; and technology.
- **Administration** – The NMSP maintains administrative structures that provide for: budget formulation and tracking; and annual operation plan development and evaluation; and development of interagency and other special agreements.



