

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Anchoring Impacts to Resources

Management Issue

Maritime heritage resources of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (TBNMS or Sanctuary) are being damaged by recreational boat anchoring.

Description

It is a common practice among divers to “grapple” or drop an anchor into a shipwreck in order to position a dive boat over a wreck site. The practice damages fragile shipwrecks sites and can be unsafe for divers. TBNMS installed moorings at popular shipwreck sites eliminate this damage and make for safer diving. Given the increased interest in diving at shipwreck sites beyond the recreational limit of 130 feet, and the recent 9-fold expansion of the sanctuary’s

boundaries, specialized mooring system are needed for these sites as well. These sites are often the best preserved in the sanctuary and most susceptible to anchor damage.



The schooner F T Barney, though very much intact, is also fragile and is susceptible to anchor damage and the effects of grappling. Photo Credit: TBNMS

Questions and Information Needs

- 1) How does TBNMS determine which shipwreck sites are popular and receiving a large number of divers?
- 2) What is the best mooring system to install?
- 3) What are the engineering and safety considerations for installing moorings at shipwreck sites in the 130-240 foot depth range?

Scientific Approach and Actions

- Conduct a diver survey to determine traffic patterns. Include local diver charters, postage paid mailers at boat ramps, and survey of divers visiting the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center.
- Conduct baseline archeological assessments of sites chosen for moorings.
- Investigate commercial mooring options and moorings systems currently used within ONMS.
- Investigate “deepwater” moorings installed at other MPAs, as well as commercial systems.
- Garner input from Resource Protection Management Plan working group.

Potential Key Partners and Information Sources

Commercial mooring vendors and contract installers, Military (i.e. U.S. Army dive team)

Management Support Products

- Data set on diver use of sanctuary resources
- A comprehensive evaluation of potential mooring systems

Planned Use of Products and Actions

- Installed mooring systems at popular shipwreck sites.

Updated: 9/5/2014

For More Information -- <http://www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/assessment>

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Program References

TBNMS Management Plan,

- TBNMS Final Management Plan Activity 4.2, (page 14).

TBNMS Condition Report

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