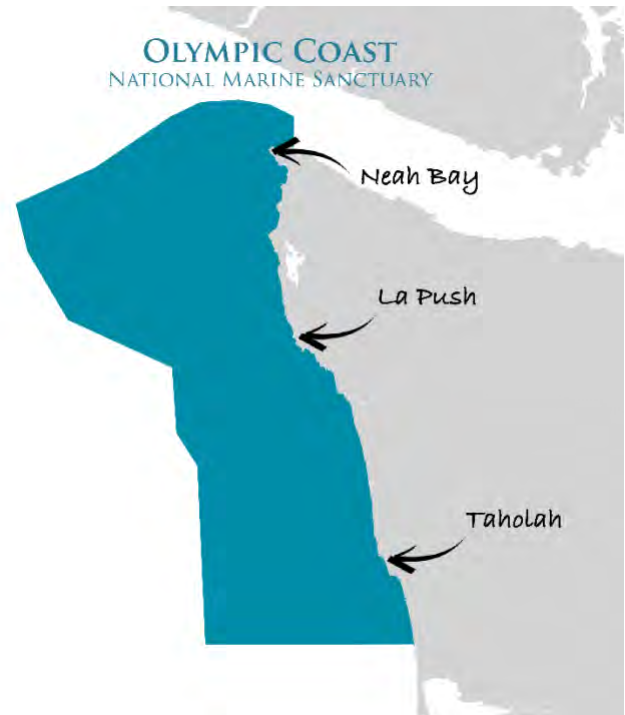


Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Accomplishments

Fiscal Year 2020

Established in 1994, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary includes 3,188 square miles of marine waters off the rugged Olympic Peninsula coastline. The sanctuary extends 25 to 50 miles seaward, covering much of the continental shelf and several major submarine canyons. The sanctuary protects 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.

Visit olympiccoast.noaa.gov for more information.



Ocean acidification sentinel site

Olympic Coast was officially designated as a sentinel site for ocean acidification to focus on related science and identify trends in carbonate chemistry and hypoxia through collaborative monitoring, research, outreach, and public engagement. The sentinel site will help inform resource managers and coastal communities by telling the story of ocean acidification and its impacts on Washington coastal marine resources, cultures, communities, and economies. The sentinel site will ensure that the sanctuary is well prepared for changing ocean conditions, with research and information that supports management responses and actions.

Viewers around the world explore the deep sea at home

Using the power of telepresence, Nautilus Live connected sanctuary scientists to learners around the world as they explored deep-sea coral, sponge, and fish communities, as well as thriving methane seep communities. Using remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), research focused on Quinault Canyon, which lies partially within sanctuary boundaries and within the protected harvest areas for Quinault Indian Nation. The team also returned to the site of a large meteorite fall that occurred in 2018 to recover meteorite fragments from the seafloor within the Quinault Canyon.



Research moorings have a variety of instrumentation for recording long-term, high-quality data to understand oceanographic conditions within the sanctuary. Photo: NOAA



Scientists use a remotely operated vehicle to explore life on the seafloor, including this small octopus. Photo: Ocean Exploration Trust

Sanctuary supports teachers and students

Following school closures associated with COVID-19, the sanctuary education team quickly adapted by working closely with regional teachers and educational partners to develop new tools, new materials, and new ways of connecting students to the outside world. Through virtual professional development workshops and online student lessons, the sanctuary provided opportunities for students to explore the ocean, their backyards, and local areas virtually or on their own. Knowing the varied challenges with access to student learning and technology, sanctuary staff also worked with schools to provide printed copies of NOAA resources for at-home learning.



Camp-in-a-Box provided all the supplies needed for youth to conduct science and craft activities at home. Photo: Elliot/NOAA

Partner engagement to support new condition report

Through a collaborative effort, sanctuary staff worked closely with partners to advance the site's 2020 Condition Report. The comprehensive process allowed staff and partners to compile current information on the status and trends of water quality, habitat, living, cultural, and maritime archaeological resources, and the human activities that affect them. Several enhancements and innovations shaped the Olympic Coast process to better incorporate tribal perspectives and their reciprocal relationship with nature developed over millennia of stewardship.



Point of Arches is located in Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: NOAA

Looking Ahead

- The sanctuary will pilot a process to better characterize how climate change is affecting its marine resources and what can be done to improve resiliency in the face of such changes.
- Working with All American Marine, a Bellingham, Washington boat builder, the sanctuary will finalize the construction of a new research vessel with increased capacity to perform research and monitoring, and the only research vessel dedicated to Washington's outer coast.
- The sanctuary will collaborate with Olympic Peninsula Tourism Council and local recreational and tourism businesses to identify innovative ways to promote sustainable tourism and enhance visitor experiences in the region.

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



The National Marine Sanctuary System is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. The network includes a system of 14 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.