

## Working with Indigenous Communities



A Native Hawaiian cultural ceremony at a traditional fishpond on the island of Maui, near the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Ed Lyman/NOAA

As a place-based program, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) has an important responsibility and opportunity to work with Indigenous communities to better understand and recognize their rights, responsibilities, knowledge, values, and other connections to places and resources. These connections to place are central to the identities and cultures of Indigenous peoples. NOAA recognizes its trust responsibility to protect tribal treaty rights, lands, assets, and resources. Working with Indigenous communities is essential to fulfill NOAA's mission to protect national marine sanctuaries as nationally significant places for current and future generations.

ONMS has created a road map to improve our engagement and collaboration with Indigenous communities and support Indigenous-led conservation and restoration priorities related to the sanctuary system. We have identified three goals to foster effective and meaningful engagement and collaboration with Indigenous communities, together with approaches and actions for FY22-23. We are seeking a dialogue with Indigenous communities on how to best to work toward these goals.

### GOALS:

#### 1. Strengthening ONMS' organizational culture

Approaches: Build trust and respect through long-term cooperative relationships with Indigenous communities through listening and meaningful engagement; sharing and co-generating knowledge and information; understanding the historical, political, social, cultural and environmental context; recognizing the spectrum of interactions from informal engagement to formal consultation; and cooperatively developing and implementing management actions.

### Terminology

Indigenous peoples of the U.S. and its territories have diverse relationships with the U.S. government and terminology is important and specific to each Indigenous group and how they may organize and govern themselves. Therefore, ONMS uses the term 'Indigenous communities' to refer to all native, tribal and Indigenous peoples, organizations, governments or other forms of Indigenous self-determination, regardless of political status.

## 2. Increasing ONMS' capacity to build trust and respect with Indigenous communities

Approaches: Define organizational structure, staff training and capacity building needs for Indigenous engagement, including budget and staffing support; establish priorities; develop and deliver training; understand and apply legal trust responsibilities; and collaborate with other Federal agencies.

## 3. Supporting increased opportunities for Indigenous involvement in the sanctuary system and with ocean and Great Lakes science and management

Approaches: Support opportunities for greater Indigenous involvement in the sanctuary system and ocean science and management, including through internships, employment and professional development; co-development of cooperative projects; and resources to support partner engagement. Amplify Indigenous voices through sanctuary products, visitor centers and events. Work with Indigenous groups to identify their needs, constraints and opportunities to engage with NOAA, and increase awareness about ONMS's mission and activities

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## ONMS Indigenous Communities Engagement Team

ONMS has established a new Indigenous Communities Engagement Team to lead progress on these goals.

The team will:

- Lead implementation of Indigenous engagement across ONMS and subsequent development and implementation of guiding documents on Indigenous engagement.
- Provide oversight of ONMS implementation of tribal consultation and coordination conducted under E.O. 13175, NHPA and other relevant laws and policies.
- Support managers and other staff in engaging with Indigenous partners in planning, management, science, and educational activities such as tribal cultural landscape assessments, nominations and designations, condition reports, management plan updates, etc.
- Develop and implement ONMS training and capacity-building for Indigenous engagement.
- Partner with federal agencies and international partners to promote and support Indigenous engagement and collaboration.
- Make annual recommendations to ONMS leadership regarding priorities and budget needs for Indigenous engagement.



Chumash community members carry a tomol after accomplishing their traditional canoe passage, which occurs through the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary. Photo: Robert Schwemmer/NOAA