



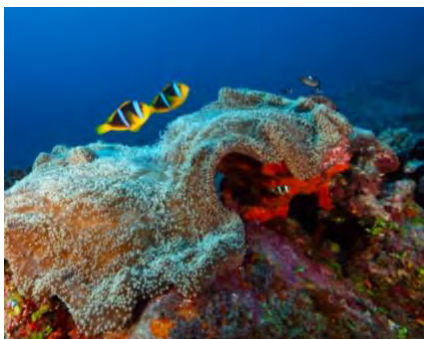
## National Marine Sanctuary System



National marine sanctuaries are great places to view our planet's largest mammals in their natural habitat. Photo: Matt McIntosh/NOAA



Volunteers get involved in national marine sanctuaries in many ways, such as participating in whale counts. Photo: Cindy Among-Serrao/NOAA



Sanctuaries are places to experience the power and beauty of the ocean. Photo: Greg McFall/NOAA

The National Marine Sanctuary System—America's network of underwater parks—stretches from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Ontario to American Samoa. It includes places of immeasurable beauty and inspiration, places that provide shelter for marine life, and places full of history.

Since 1975, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has been entrusted with the stewardship of these special places—16 national marine sanctuaries and two marine national monuments—in the ocean and Great Lakes. The system of ocean parks spans the site of a single Civil War shipwreck to a vast expanse of ocean surrounding remote coral reefs and tiny atolls.

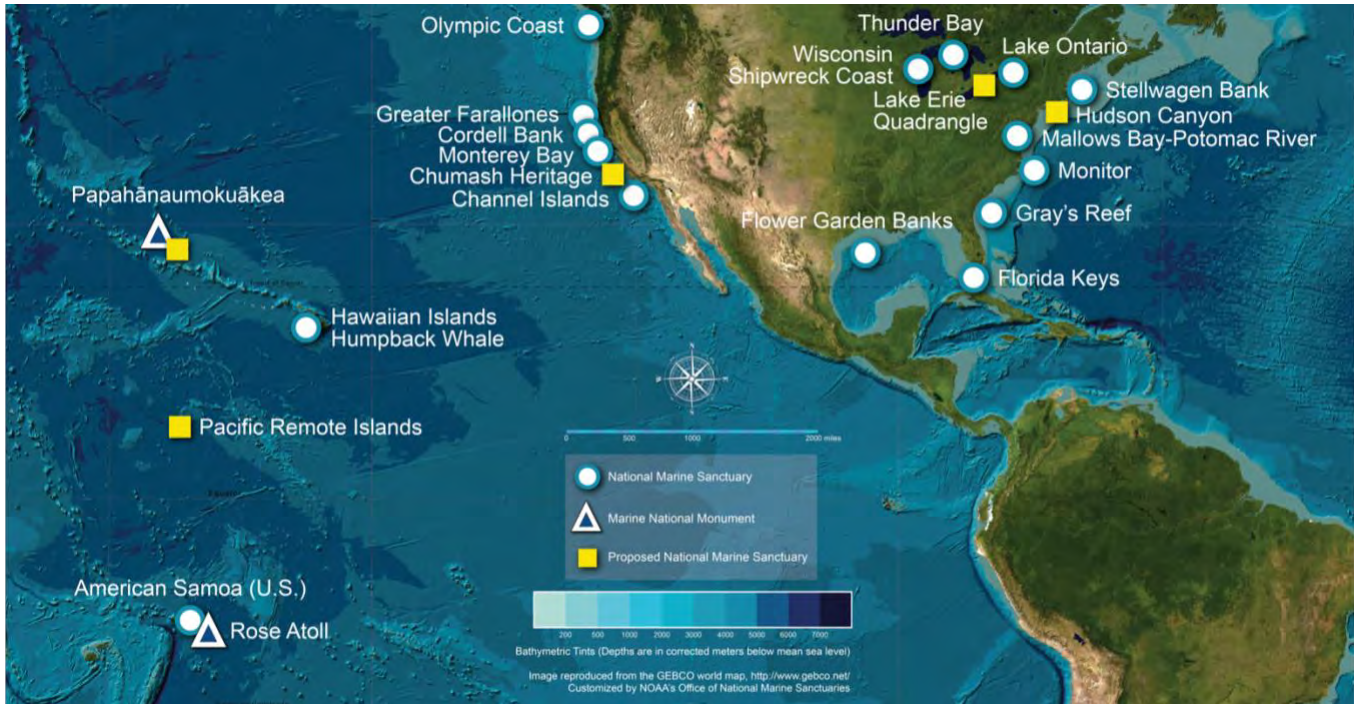
From lush seagrass beds to slow-growing, deep-sea corals, the habitats protected by sanctuary waters vary greatly from place to place. Some sanctuaries are breeding and feeding grounds for endangered whales, while others are home to cultural seascapes and archaeological treasures. Few places on the planet can compete with the diversity of the National Marine Sanctuary System.

Each national marine sanctuary and marine national monument has its own unique history and purpose, set aside for both protection and enjoyment, now and in the future. Decisions about how to best manage these special places are made using the best available scientific information, as well as extensive public input.



As a seafaring nation, America's greatest museum of our past lays on the bottom of the sea and lakes in the National Marine Sanctuary System. Photo: David J. Ruck/NOAA

# National Marine Sanctuary System



From land to sea, the waters and ecosystems of national marine sanctuaries and monuments connect people and communities through science, education, and stewardship. They support coastal communities and drive local economies. They provide jobs and opportunities for people to discover, recreate, and form lifelong connections with some of the most iconic places on the planet. Many of the habitats within national marine sanctuaries provide ecosystem services, such as supporting biodiversity,



Sanctuaries provide idyllic settings for many recreational activities. Photo: Sienna Stream

providing shoreline protection against waves, storms, and floods, and storing carbon long-term and buffering climate change.

The National Marine Sanctuary System serves as a model for community involvement in the protection and management of public resources. National marine sanctuaries are beacons of hope and places of solutions. The successes across the National Marine Sanctuary System show that conservation, economic prosperity, and human well-being



National marine sanctuaries are home to a wide variety of habitats. Photo: Greg McFall/NOAA

are not only possible to achieve together, but are realized in America's ocean parks.

## Find Us on the Web

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Many endangered or threatened species are found in these places. Photo: Mark Sullivan/NOAA