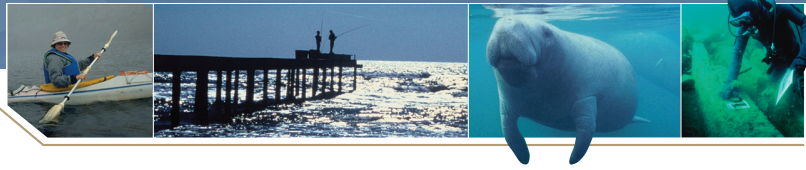


DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS



Overview

The past two decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the use of marine protected areas (MPAs) as a conservation and management tool to protect the nation's most important natural and cultural marine resources and areas. In response to this trend, Presidential Executive Order 13158 (May 26, 2000) directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National MPA Center to work with the Department of the Interior and other agencies and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan for an effective, integrated national system of MPAs. Since its inception in 2001, the MPA Center has been gathering fundamental information to develop the national system in a way that will meet diverse conservation goals throughout U.S. waters by using the best available science and existing MPA authorities and programs.

The next major step in this effort is to develop the framework for the national system. The Framework will describe the rationale, goals and components of the National System, and the processes for designing and implementing it based on sound science and broad stakeholder input. In 2005, the MPA Center began engaging the nation in a series of participatory dialogues to develop the framework, of which recommendations and input from the MPA Federal Advisory Committee, agencies, authorities, and public stakeholders are a cornerstone.

Framework Outline

The following is a conceptual outline of the organization and content of the framework, which will be developed from agency and stakeholder input.

I. Introduction

Rationale for the National System of MPAs: Summarizes the need for and benefits of the national system. Also outlines the mandate for the national system and describes its relationship to existing MPA authorities and programs.

Origin of the Draft Framework: Outlines the process through which the framework was formulated, including the role of the Federal Advisory Committee and its recommendations, a summary of stakeholder and agency participation, and the input of state and federal advisory groups.

II. Defining the National System

Common Language: Provides a summary of the MPA Center's classification system for MPAs, which provides an objective set of terms to describe and understand the purpose and level of protection afforded by any MPA.

Guiding Principles: Outlines the core principles that will guide the development and implementation of the national system, including: clear goals and objectives; based on best available science; coordinated across levels of government; informed by stakeholder input; and evaluated and adaptively managed.

National System Goals, Components and MPA Criteria: Provides the national goals, objectives, and suite of MPA site types (i.e., components) of the national system. Also defines specific criteria for MPAs to be eligible for inclusion in the national system and on the resulting list of MPAs.

III. Designing the National System

Three MPA National System Tracks: Describes three tracks – natural heritage, cultural heritage, and sustainable production – that will frame the collaborative regional level planning processes with partner agencies and programs to identify conservation and management priorities.

Identifying Existing National System MPAs: Details the process for applying the national system goals, objectives, and criteria to identify and nominate existing MPA sites that are eligible for the national system. Further describes the process for consulting with agencies and programs with authority over those eligible sites to bring them into the national system and onto the resulting MPA list.

Identifying Regional Place-Based Conservation Priorities: Summarizes the key steps for collaborative regional planning to identify gaps in protection and priorities for future MPA actions based on: a) an assessment of how existing sites selected for the national system collectively meet its goals; b) the levels of protection afforded by other existing place-based marine management efforts; c) the characterization of resources, habitats and ecosystems; and d) the evaluation of threats.

Identifying Options for Governance: Provides an overview and assessment of the existing MPA legal framework for designating and managing MPAs, identification of legal, policy and/or coordination options within and across governmental levels, and the process for governing the national system.

The Integrated Plan for the Comprehensive National System: Outlines the plan that will detail the integrated, comprehensive system of existing sites and priority areas that collectively meet national system conservation and management objectives.

IV. Implementing and Maintaining the National System

Implementing the Comprehensive National System: Describes how evolving needs within the national system will be identified and addressed; outlines principles for evaluating its effectiveness; and describes the resources required for maintenance. Illustrates how existing programs and authorities can use the plan to inform their priorities for new and enhanced MPAs.

Building Capacity for Long-Term Stewardship and Adaptive Management: Describes the information, skills, tools, and processes needed to support long-term stewardship and identifies mechanisms for building and/or coordinating the necessary capacity among national system partner programs.

Stakeholder Participation

To create a national system that represents the nation's interests in the conservation and sustainable use of its natural and cultural marine resources, the MPA Center and its partners are collecting input and feedback from a variety of stakeholder groups to develop the framework. Specifically, meetings are planned for groups including federal agencies, state and territorial agencies, the public, and the cross-sector MPA Federal Advisory Committee.

MPA Federal Advisory Committee and Meetings: The MPA Federal Advisory Committee, with thirty members representing broad stakeholder groups and nine federal agency *ex-officio* members was first convened in 2003 to provide recommendations on the development of the national system and implementation of the MPA Executive Order. The Advisory Committee delivered its first recommendations in June 2005.

Federal Agency Working Group and Workshops: A federal agency working group provides coordinated advice from federal agencies on the implementation of the MPA Executive Order. A workshop and ongoing subcommittees will aid the efforts of this working group.

State and Territory Agency Advisory Group and Workshops: The Coastal States Organization and MPA Center convened an advisory group to provide a forum for states and territories to provide input about their participation in the national system. Three regional, invitational workshops of state and territory fishery, coastal management, and cultural agency representatives will be held to develop these recommendations.

Regional Public Dialogues: A series of regional forums are planned to provide information on the process to develop the national system and provide an opportunity for feedback.

For More Information

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