



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of Public Affairs
1849 C Street, N.W
Washington, DC 20240
202-208-6843 phone
202-219-0910 fax

National Park Service News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Gerry Gaumer 202 208-6843
Cliff McCreedy 202 513-7164

National Park Service Announces Ocean Park Stewardship Action Plan

(Virgin Islands National Park, St. John, USVI) --- At an event celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Virgin Islands National Park, the National Park Service today announced the release of the Ocean Park Stewardship Action Plan - a comprehensive plan by the agency for restoring and maintaining ocean resources in the National Park System for current and future generations.

Supported by President Bush's U.S. Ocean Action Plan and the Department of the Interior, the Ocean Park Stewardship Action Plan was drafted with input from the NPS National Leadership Council, Park Superintendents and various partners. The Ocean Park Plan will focus the organizational and scientific capacity of the Park Service on conserving marine, estuarine and Great Lakes resources, in conjunction with state and federal agencies and park stakeholders.

"I am excited to announce the establishment of the Ocean Park Stewardship Action Plan," said Mary Bomar, Director of the National Park Service. "This comprehensive program represents our commitment to restore and maintain productive fisheries, habitats, and wildlife in the ocean parks, and ensure the recreational opportunities they afford to hundreds of communities and millions of visitors. I am pleased that the Ocean Park Plan highlights collaborations with other agencies and private partners, including the recently signed interagency agreement for a seamless network of ocean parks, wildlife refuges, marine sanctuaries and estuarine reserves."

The National Park System contains more than 5,100 miles of beaches, coral reefs, kelp forests, wetlands, historic shipwrecks and forts, and other jewels of the coastal zone that attract over 75 million visitors every year. These parks play a critical role in conserving the nation's ocean and Great Lakes heritage. In 74 parks, spanning 25 coastal states and U.S. territories, people come to camp, fish, snorkel, scuba dive, boat, and watch wildlife. These parks also generate over \$2.5 billion in economic benefits to local communities.

(more)

NPS coastal and oceanic treasures can be found in areas as diverse as Assateague Island National Seashore in Maryland, Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska, Point Reyes National Seashore in California, Dry Tortugas National Park in Florida, Cape Lookout National Seashore in North Carolina, the National Park of American Samoa, Padre Island National Seashore in Texas, and Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in Wisconsin.

To read and learn more about the Ocean Park Stewardship Strategy and coastal and oceanic parks in the National Park System, visit the *Above and Below the Waves: Coastal and Oceanic Treasures in the National Park System* website at http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/oceans/conserve.htm.

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