



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
OFFICE OF OCEAN AND COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

November 20, 2008

Dear Marine Protected Areas Program Manager:

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are a valuable tool for conserving significant natural and cultural marine resources and are increasingly used for a wide range of purposes, including protecting ecosystems, restoring fisheries, and conserving important cultural and historic resources. To enhance the effective use of MPAs in the U.S., the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Department of the Interior, working with federal, state, territorial and tribal agencies, the MPA Federal Advisory Committee, and the public, have established a national system of MPAs. The national system of MPAs is a key requirement of Executive Order 13158 on marine protected areas, and is described in the *Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America*, which was released this week and is posted at www.mpa.gov.

I am writing to invite your MPA program(s) to participate in this important marine conservation initiative by nominating eligible sites within your MPA program to become part of the national system. The national system will benefit participating state, territorial, federal and tribal MPAs through regional coordination to address common resource management issues, providing a mechanism to address local and regional MPA priorities through federal ocean management initiatives, raising awareness of MPAs and the ocean resources they conserve, and supporting targeted regional science and stewardship initiatives.

The National Marine Protected Areas Center coordinates the national system and maintains an MPA Inventory, built from data provided by federal and state MPA programs. Based on an analysis of this data, the MPA Center has determined that the site(s) listed in the Program Summary Sheet for your MPA Program are potentially eligible for the national system. (Copies of Program Summary Sheets have been mailed to all eligible MPA Programs; if you did not receive them or have questions, refer to the contact information at the end of this letter.)

There are three entry criteria for the national system (plus a fourth for cultural heritage). Sites that meet all the criteria, listed below, are eligible for the national system.

1. Meets the definition of an MPA as defined in the Framework
2. Has a management plan (can be site-specific or part of a broader programmatic management plan; must have goals and objectives and call for monitoring or evaluation of those goals and objectives)
3. Contributes to at least one priority conservation objective as listed in the Framework
4. Cultural heritage MPAs must also conform to criteria for the National Register for Historic Places.



According to our records, the Program Summary Sheet for your MPA Program includes a list of potentially eligible sites for your program that meet criteria #1 and #2. If you would like to nominate some or all of these sites to the national system, we ask that you provide documentation as to whether and how these sites meet criterion #3 (and #4, if applicable). Please see the enclosed checklist and instructions.

The MPA Center is committed to maintaining accurate and current records. Therefore, we ask that you review the information on the Program Summary Sheet and verify that the information is correct (the Program Summary Sheet can be found online as part of the web-based nomination package). In addition, member sites of the national system may be contacted following their acceptance to provide additional information that will help the MPA Center target its national system science and stewardship activities.

This letter is being sent to managers and designated points of contact for federal, state and territorial MPA programs. Some states and territories have more than one agency responsible for managing MPAs. In order to encourage cross-agency coordination during the nomination process, we are sending the list of all the potentially eligible sites in your state to each managing agency. If you did not receive this letter and wish to make a submission please contact Lauren Wenzel at the information below. We request all submissions, including completed checklists and any corrections to the Program Summary Sheet, in excel format. Please contact the MPA Center for the appropriate format and with any questions.

Please email your nomination checklist(s) and any changes to the Program Summary Sheet to Lauren Wenzel at the MPA Center by **January 30, 2009**. Lauren can also respond to questions about completing the checklist or other issues related to the national system nomination process, and can be reached at 301-563-1136 or Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Uravitch
Director
National Marine Protected Areas Center

Nomination Package Components:

- Nomination Process Fact Sheet (enclosed)
- Checklist for Evaluating Whether Existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Meet Priority Conservation Objectives for the National System of MPAs (enclosed)
- Instructions and Definitions Sheet for Checklist (enclosed)
- Definitions of Terms for Program Summary Sheet – Potentially Eligible MPAs for the National System of MPAs (enclosed)
- Benefits of a National System of Marine Protected Areas Fact Sheet (enclosed)
- Program Summary Sheet (List of Potentially Eligible MPAs) (found online as part of the web-based nomination package)



IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS: NOMINATION PROCESS

www.mpa.gov

The U.S. is implementing a comprehensive, science-based and effective national system of marine protected areas (MPAs). The national system will include eligible existing MPAs across all levels of government to protect important habitats and resources. For more information, visit www.mpa.gov.

NOMINATION PROCESS FOR EXISTING SITES TO JOIN THE NATIONAL SYSTEM

The nomination process for the National System of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is designed to be transparent, science-based, and to provide an opportunity for public comment. The National Marine Protected Areas Center will be responsible for the technical review of nominations.

There are three entry criteria for existing MPAs to join the national system (plus a fourth for cultural heritage). Sites that meet the following three criteria (four for cultural heritage) are eligible for the national system:

1. Meets the definition of an MPA as defined in the *Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America*.
2. Has a management plan (can be site-specific or part of a broader programmatic management plan; must have site goals and objectives and call for monitoring or evaluation of those goals and objectives).
3. Contributes to at least one priority conservation objective as listed in the Framework.
4. Cultural heritage MPAs must also conform to criteria for the National Register for Historic Places.

The MPA Center will use existing information from the MPA Inventory to determine which sites meet the first two criteria. These identified sites will be potentially eligible MPAs. The managing entities of potentially eligible MPAs will be sent a nomination package and invited to nominate some or all of their potentially eligible sites for inclusion in the national system. To do so, they will be asked to document how each nominated MPA meets criterion number three above.

ENSURING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

All nominated sites will be available for public comment. The public will be notified through a *Federal Register* notice, information on www.mpa.gov, and other targeted outreach. The MPA Center will receive, evaluate and forward public comment to the relevant managing entity or entities, which will then reaffirm or withdraw the nomination based on public comment received and other factors deemed relevant. After final MPA Center review, mutually agreed upon MPAs will be accepted into the national system.



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) will make a public announcement of the first group of MPAs accepted into the national system. MPAs accepted into the national system will also be added to the official List of National System MPAs, which will be made available to the public via the *Federal Register*, the website www.mpa.gov, and other means.

continued on back

NOAA's National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center's mission is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas. The MPA Center works in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments and stakeholders to develop a science-based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. These collaborative efforts will lead to a more efficient, effective use of MPAs now and in the future to conserve and sustain the nation's vital marine resources.



The nomination process will remain open after the first group of sites has been accepted. Nominations will be accepted on a rolling basis, with formal updates to the List and public announcements provided on a periodic basis.

DRAFT TIMELINE FOR INITIAL NOMINATION PROCESS:

LATE NOVEMBER 2008:

Announce publication of *Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America* and beginning of nomination process.

MPA Center sends out nomination packages to federal, state and territorial MPA managing entities with potentially eligible existing sites.

LATE JANUARY 2009:

Nomination forms due

MID FEBRUARY 2009:

MPA Center makes list of nominated national system MPAs available for public review; notice in *Federal Register* and on www.mpa.gov.

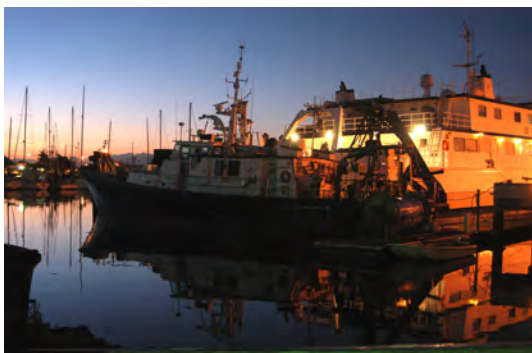
LATE MARCH 2009:

MPA Center and managing entities review public comments received. Managing entities make final determination about which sites to nominate.

MPA Center reviews final nominations to ensure criteria are met.

APRIL 2009:

MPA Center notifies the managing entities of accepted sites. NOAA and DOI make announcement of first sites to join the National System of MPAs. Official List of National System sites posted on www.mpa.gov.



For more information on the National System of Marine Protected Areas, visit www.mpa.gov

Joseph A. Uravitch
Director, National MPA Center
(301) 563-1195
Joseph.Uravitch@noaa.gov

Dr. Charles Wahle
Senior Scientist
(831) 242-2052
Charles.Wahle@noaa.gov

Lauren Wenzel
National System Coordinator
(301) 563-1136
Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov



Checklist for Evaluating Whether Existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) Meet Priority Conservation Objectives For The National System of MPAs

To be filled out by managing programs based on existing knowledge and information.

Please refer to the provided instructions for more information.

Site Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Contact Email: _____

	(1) Presence: Site Contains the PCO?	(2) Goals: Site Management Goals or Objectives Address the PCO?	(3) Tools: Site Has Protection or Regulations That Benefit the PCO?	(4) Citation for Regulation in Column 3	(5) Information Source: Site Manager, URL, etc.) Insert (A thru G)
Priority Conservation Objectives (PCOs) Conserve and Manage:					
Natural Heritage					
Key reproduction areas and nursery grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key biogenic habitats	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Areas of high species and/or high diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Ecologically important geological features and enduring/recurring oceanographic features	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Critical habitat of threatened and endangered species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Unique or rare species, habitats and associated communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key areas for migratory species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Linked areas important to life histories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Cultural Heritage					
Key cultural and historic resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key cultural historic resources determined eligible for the NRHP or listed on a State Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key cultural sites that are paramount to a culture's identity and/or survival	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key cultural and historic sites that may be threatened	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key cultural and historic sites that can be utilized for heritage tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key cultural and historic sites that are under-represented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Sustainable Production					
Key reproduction areas, including larval sources and nursery grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key areas that sustain or restore high priority fishing grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key areas for maintaining natural age/sex structure of important harvestable species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key foraging grounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key areas that mitigate the impacts of bycatch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Legend for (5) Information Sources (Indicate all that apply A-G)	
A. Site Management Plan	E. Program Web Site
B. Code of Federal Regulations	F. Scientific Paper(s)
C. Code of State Regulations	G. Other
D. Site Manager	

Note: The National Marine Protected Areas Center has reviewed the MPA Inventory and provided a list of potentially eligible sites to MPA Programs to invite them to nominate these sites by submitting this checklist. Potentially eligible sites are those that meet the criteria for 1) meeting the definition of an MPA; and 2) having a management plan. See attached instructions for details on completing this checklist for the priority conservation objectives component.

Instructions and Definitions
Checklist for Evaluating Whether Existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)
Meet Priority Conservation Objectives of the National System of MPAs

November 2008

The National Marine Protected Area Center (MPAC) invites you to complete the enclosed checklist for your program's potentially eligible marine protected area(s) (MPA) for nomination of the site(s) into the National System of MPAs. A list of sites that the MPA Center has determined to meet most of the national system eligibility criteria has been enclosed with this nomination package. This checklist provides information on the remaining eligibility criteria, contribution to the national system's priority conservation objectives. One form should be submitted for each potentially eligible site that the Program wishes to nominate.

The checklist should be completed by the managing agency of the MPA, in consultation with any other entities with management responsibilities for that site. The managing agency has the ultimate responsibility for nominating their sites to the national system. Non-governmental organizations or members of the public wishing to nominate sites will be referred to the managing agency.

The initial deadline for nominations is January 30, 2009. (Nominations will be accepted on a rolling basis with an annual announcement thereafter.) For further information about the National System of MPAs please refer to www.mpa.gov and the *Framework for Developing the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America (November 2008)* For questions about completing the checklist please contact Lauren Wenzel at 301-563-1136 or Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov

Instructions for completing the Priority Conservation Objectives Checklist

- Please read all instructions carefully and refer to the definitions below for further clarification.
- The checklist should be completed electronically in the attached Excel spreadsheet and emailed to: Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov.
- Please fill in the name of the site. Use a separate checklist for each site.
- Please fill in your name or the name of the appropriate contact person regarding the site and the answers on the checklist.
- Please fill in the telephone number and email for the contact person
- Mark an **X** in each box where your answer to the question in columns (1)-(3) is a YES,
 - **X = Yes**

- Leave the box blank if the answer to the question in columns (1)-(3) is a NO.
 - leave blank = **No**
- For column (4) please enter letter(s) A-G. A legend is provided on the checklist for descriptions of A-G.
 - A. Site Management Plan
 - B. Code of Federal Regulations
 - C. Code of State Regulations
 - D. Site Manager
 - E. Program Web Site
 - F. Scientific Paper(s)
 - G. Other

**Checklist for Evaluating Whether Existing MPAs Meet National System
Priority Conservation Objectives (PCOs) Column Definitions**

Note: The Program must answer “YES” to questions 1, 2, and 3 to meet the eligibility criteria for contributing to a PCO. Question 4 provides additional information about the site to the MPA Center. Information on your Program’s sites is a very valuable addition to the MPA Inventory. Even if you are not able to answer “YES” to all three questions, please answer the questions for each PCO in relation to your site.

(1) PRESENCE: Site Contains the PCO? Referencing the Priority Conservation Objective (PCO) definitions below, are there geographic areas within the site boundary that meet the definition described by the PCO? If the site meets this PCO mark an X for YES. If the site does not meet the PCO leave the space blank.

(2) GOALS: Site Management Goals or Objectives Address the PCO? If the site management goals and/or objectives explicitly focus on the PCO mark an X for YES. If the site does not meet the PCO leave the space blank.

(3) TOOLS: Site has Protection or Regulations that Benefit the PCO? If the site has protections or regulations of your program that directly target the PCO mark an X for YES. If there are no such protections or regulations, leave the space blank. Your answer should reflect the protections and regulations established by your program for your site, not other authorities that may occur within your site. Do not answer YES if your site is protected by the regulations of another agency. For example, if a National Marine Sanctuary formally adopts a state or federal fisheries regulation, then the site should answer YES to relevant PCOs for this question because those regulations are part of its program. However, if the regulation has not been formally adopted by the Sanctuary but applies there, the answer should be NO. As another example, if regulations for a National Estuarine Research Reserve are resource specific, rather than site-specific, but are formally networked and referenced in the designation document

for the reserve or some other subsequent legal authority, then the answer for the relevant PCOs would be YES. Education and research programs are non-regulatory and are therefore non-applicable.

(4) Citation for Regulation in Column 3. If you answered YES in column 3, cite the federal or state regulation here.

(5) Information Source (Insert A-G, reference legend provided). What is the most applicable information source for this PCO within your site that the Marine Protected Area Center should reference? (Indicate all that apply.)

- A. Site Management Plan
- B. Code of Federal Regulations
- C. Code of State Regulations
- D. Site Manager
- E. Program Web Site
- F. Scientific Paper(s)
- G. Other

Priority Conservation Objective Definitions

Note: The intent of these definitions is to be broad enough to encompass a diversity of areas within the marine, coastal and estuarine environments. Many definitions are intended to overlap.

Key is defined as controlling or important. When considering the objective, an area is “key” if it directly controls or is important to the objective named.

Goal 1: For Natural Heritage Marine Resources - Advance comprehensive conservation and management of the nation’s biological communities, habitats, ecosystems, and processes, and the ecological services, uses, and values they provide to present and future generations through ecosystem-based MPA approaches.

Priority Conservation Objectives for Goal 1: Conserve and manage:

- **Key reproduction areas and nursery grounds:** These areas may include marine, estuarine, and coastal sites where resting, hauling-out, mating, spawning, loafing, feeding, or foraging take place that is important to marine species reproduction and nursery behaviors such as mating, rearing, feeding, weaning, etc.
- **Key biogenic habitats:** Habitat created by a living organism. Some examples include sea grasses, macroalgae, ascidians, sponges, bivalve reefs, corals, hydrothermal vents and kelp forests.
- **Areas of high species and/or habitat diversity:** Areas that have high species diversity or habitat diversity within the marine, coastal and estuarine environments. Species diversity is defined as a variety of species present in a given area. Habitat diversity is defined as a variety of habitats present in a given area.
- **Ecologically important geological features and enduring/recurring oceanographic features:** Ecologically important geological formations within the marine, estuarine and coastal environment and oceanographic features that are relatively consistent in form and location. Marine or coastal geologic features can include, but are not limited to, seamounts, banks, canyons, and rocky outcrops. Ecologically important enduring/recurring oceanographic features can include, but are not limited to currents, transition zones and water masses.
- **Critical habitat of threatened and endangered species:** Defined as a habitat type or location that is critical or essential to a threatened or endangered species as defined by the Endangered Species Act.

- **Unique or rare species, habitats and associated communities:** Associated communities can mean any marine, coastal or estuarine area that supports a unique or rare species or habitat.
- **Key areas for migratory species:** Areas that have been identified or are thought to be important to migratory species (including fish, birds, mammals, etc).
- **Linked areas important to life histories:** Linked areas are those locations a species might use at different life stages that are important to the maintenance of a particular species' life cycle and should be protected as a network.
- **Key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research:** Areas that are important to education and research can include but are not limited to formal and informal education, interpretation and study locations.

Goal 2: For Cultural Heritage Marine Resources - Advance comprehensive conservation and management of cultural resources that reflect the nation's maritime history and traditional cultural connections to the sea, as well as the uses and values they provide to present and future generations through ecosystem-based MPA approaches. Under the cultural heritage goal, only MPAs with submerged cultural heritage resources are eligible for the national system. Cultural resources associated with the marine environment that are not submerged, such as lighthouses, are not included within this definition.

Priority Conservation Objectives for Goal 2 – Conserve and manage:

- **Key cultural and historic resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).** The resource(s) is (are) listed on the NRHP. Standards developed by the National Park Service for inclusion of a cultural resource in the National Register of Historical Places (NRHP) require that the cultural marine resources within those MPAs must be historic, defined as at least 50 years of age, unless otherwise determined to be unique to the nation's maritime history or traditional connections to the sea as defined by the NRHP. In addition, the resources must also meet the following NRHP evaluation criteria:

“The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or

C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.”

- ***Key cultural and historic resources determined eligible for the NRHP or listed on a State Register.*** If the cultural or historic resource(s) is (are) determined eligible for the NRHP or is listed on the State Register. This determination is made by the State Historic Preservation Officer. See criteria for the NRHP listed under the bullet above.
- ***Key cultural sites that are paramount to a culture’s identity and/or survival.*** Sites determined by a culture to be paramount to that culture’s identity and/or survival. This includes sacred places identified by tribal or community officials representing Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, or Native Alaskans. Federally recognized tribes have a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer who may be responsible for this determination.
- ***Key cultural and historic sites that may be threatened.*** A cultural and/or historic site that is threatened by anthropogenic or natural harm.
- ***Key cultural and historic sites that can be utilized for heritage tourism.*** A site that can be used for tourism about cultural and/or historic heritage.
- ***Key cultural and historic sites that are underrepresented.*** If a particular cultural and/or historic sites is underrepresented within the National System. This objective will be used to guide gap analysis for cultural resources, and once there are cultural resource sites within the national system, to review them for representativeness.

Goal 3: For Sustainable Production Marine Resources - Advance comprehensive conservation and management of the nation's renewable living resources and their habitats (including, but not limited to, spawning, mating, and nursery grounds, and areas established to minimize incidental bycatch of species) and the social, cultural, and economic values and services they provide to present and future generations through ecosystem-based MPA approaches.

Priority Conservation Objectives for Goal 3 – Conserve and manage:

- **Key reproduction areas, including larval sources and nursery grounds** These areas may include, marine, estuarine, and coastal sites where resting, hauling-out, mating, spawning, loafing, feeding, or foraging take place that is important to marine species reproduction and nursery behaviors such as mating, rearing, feeding, weaning, etc.
- **Key areas that sustain or restore high priority fishing grounds.** Areas that have been determined to be vital to maintaining or bringing back high priority fishing grounds. High priority fishing grounds are determined by historic catch data, scientific study, or expert knowledge.
- **Key areas for maintaining natural age/sex structure of important harvestable species.** The natural age and sex structure of species can be altered by fishing effort. This refers to areas that are important to maintain or restore this structure. Important harvestable species are those species harvested for consumption or for the economic market.
- **Key foraging grounds.** Important foraging grounds that have been determined to be valuable as feeding areas for resource production.
- **Key areas that mitigate the impacts of bycatch.** Bycatch is the unintentional or unanticipated take of non-targeted species or individuals. These areas are important for decreasing the impacts of bycatch within the marine, coastal, and estuarine environments.
- **Key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research.** Areas that are important to education and research can include, but are not limited, to formal and informal education, interpretation, and study locations.

Definitions of Terms
Program Summary Sheet – Potentially Eligible MPAs for the
National System of Marine Protected Areas

Background

This glossary provides definitions of terms used in the Program Summary Sheets developed by the National Marine Protected Areas Center for each federal MPA program, or state/territory. The Program Summary Sheets are derived from the MPA Center's MPA Inventory, and include MPAs that are potentially eligible for the national system of MPAs because they meet most of the entry criteria specified in the *Framework for a National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America*. As part of the nomination process for the national system of MPAs, Program Summary Sheets are made available to each managing agency with eligible sites so that the managing agency can determine which, if any, sites it wishes to nominate. More information on the nomination process and the MPA Inventory is available on-line at www.mpa.gov.

How to Make Corrections to the Program Summary Sheets

Please make corrections to the Program Summary Sheets on the attached Excel spreadsheet for your MPA program(s). Note changes in the spreadsheet by highlighting the appropriate row. If you have questions, or do not have a copy of the Excel spreadsheet, please contact: Lauren Wenzel at Lauren.wenzel@noaa.gov or 301-563-1136.

GLOSSARY

Site Name

The official name of the MPA or zone.

Management Agency

MPAs are designated and managed at all levels of government by a variety of agencies including parks, fisheries, wildlife, natural resource and historic resource departments, among others. U.S. MPAs have been established by well over 100 legal authorities, with some federal and state agencies managing more than one MPA program, each with its own legal purpose.

In certain instances, authority is formally shared among two or more entities. In such cases, the agency at the higher level of government should be listed. For example, those sites dually managed by NOAA Fisheries Service and by Regional Fishery Management Councils should list NOAA Fisheries as the managing agency. Likewise, those sites dually managed by NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) and by a state agency should list NERRS as the managing agency. If no distinction can be made, list all managing agencies.

Level of Protection

MPAs in the U.S. vary widely in the level and type of legal protections afforded to the site's natural and cultural resources and ecological processes. Any MPA, or

management zone within a larger MPA, can be characterized by one of the following six levels of protection, which will directly influence its effects on the environment and human uses. Please note that site level information provided, reflects the lowest level of protection that exists for all management zones of the MPA.

- **Uniform Multiple-Use (UML):** MPAs or zones with a consistent level of protection and allowable activities, including certain extractive uses, across the entire protected area.
Examples: Uniform multiple-use MPAs are among the most common types in the U.S., and include many sanctuaries, national and state parks, and cultural resource MPAs.
- **Zoned Multiple-Use (ZML):** MPAs that allow some extractive activities throughout the entire site, but that use marine zoning to allocate specific uses to compatible places or times in order to reduce user conflicts and adverse impacts.
Examples: Zoned multiple-use MPAs are increasingly common in U.S. waters, including some marine sanctuaries, national parks, national wildlife refuges, and state MPAs.
- **Zoned Multiple-Use With No-Take Area(s) (ZNL):** Multiple-use MPAs that contain at least one legally established management zone in which all resource extraction is prohibited.
Examples: Zoned no-take MPAs are emerging gradually in U.S. waters, primarily in some national marine sanctuaries and national parks.
- **No-Take (NTL):** MPAs or zones that allow human access and even some potentially harmful uses, but that totally prohibit the extraction or significant destruction of natural or cultural resources.
Examples: No-take MPAs are relatively rare in the U.S., occurring mainly in state MPAs, in some federal areas closed for either fisheries management or the protection of endangered species, or as small special use (research) zones within larger multiple-use MPAs. Other commonly used terms to connote no-take MPAs include marine reserves or ecological reserves.
- **No Impact (NIL):** MPAs or zones that allow human access, but that prohibit all activities that could harm the site's resources or disrupt the ecological or cultural services they provide. Examples of activities typically prohibited in no-impact MPAs include resource extraction of any kind (fishing, collecting, or mining); discharge of pollutants; disposal or installation of materials; and alteration or disturbance of submerged cultural resources, biological assemblages, ecological interactions, physiochemical environmental features, protected habitats, or the natural processes that support them.
Examples: No-impact MPAs are rare in U.S. waters, occurring mainly as small isolated MPAs or in small research-only zones within larger multiple-use MPAs. Other commonly used terms include fully protected marine (or ecological) reserves.
- **No Access (NAL):** MPAs or zones that restrict all human access to the area in order to prevent potential ecological disturbance, unless specifically permitted for designated special uses such as research, monitoring or restoration.

Examples: No-access MPAs are extremely rare in the U.S., occurring mainly as small research-only zones within larger multiple-use MPAs. Other commonly used terms for no access MPAs include wilderness areas or marine preserves.

Permanence

Not all MPAs are permanently protected. Many sites differ in how long their protections remain in effect, which may in turn profoundly affect their ultimate effects on ecosystems and users.

- **Permanent (PP):** MPAs or zones whose legal authorities provide some level of protection to the site *in perpetuity* for future generations, unless reversed by unanticipated future legislation or regulatory actions.
Examples: Permanent MPAs include most national marine sanctuaries and all national parks.
- **Conditional (CP):** MPAs or zones that have the potential, and often the expectation, to persist administratively over time, but whose legal authority has a finite duration and must be actively renewed or ratified based on periodic governmental reviews of performance.
Examples: Conditional MPAs include some national marine sanctuaries with 'sunset clauses' applying to portions of the MPA in state waters
- **Temporary (TP):** MPAs that are designed to address relatively short-term conservation and/or management needs by protecting a specific habitat or species for a finite duration, with no expectation or specific mechanism for renewal.
Examples: Temporary MPAs include some fisheries closures focusing on rapidly recovering species (e.g. scallops).

Constancy

Not all MPAs provide year-round protection to the protected habitat and resources. Three degrees of constancy throughout the year are seen among U.S. MPAs.

- **Year-Round (YP):** MPAs or zones that provide constant protection to the site throughout the year.
Examples: Year-round MPAs include all marine sanctuaries, national parks, refuges, monuments, and some fisheries sites.
- **Seasonal (SP):** MPAs or zones that protect specific habitats and resources, but only during fixed seasons or periods when human uses may disrupt ecologically sensitive seasonal processes such as spawning, breeding, or feeding aggregations.
Examples: Seasonal MPAs include some fisheries and endangered species closures around sensitive habitats.
- **Rotating (RP):** MPAs that cycle serially and predictably among a set of fixed geographic areas in order to meet short-term conservation or management goals

Examples: Rotating MPAs are still rare in the U.S. They include some dynamic fisheries closures created for the purpose of serially recovering a suite of localized population to harvestable levels.

Protection Focus

MPAs in the U.S. vary widely in the ecological scale of the protection they provide. MPA conservation targets range from entire ecosystems and their associated biophysical processes, to focal habitats, species, or other resources deemed to be of economic or ecological importance. The ecological scale of a site's conservation target generally reflects its underlying legal authorities and, in turn, strongly influences the area's design, siting, management approach, and likely effects.

- **Ecosystem (ES):** MPAs or zones whose legal authorities and management measures are intended to protect all of the components and processes of the ecosystem within its boundaries.
Examples: Ecosystem-scale MPAs include most marine sanctuaries, national parks and national monuments.
- **Focal Resource (FS):** MPAs or zones whose legal authorities and management measures specifically target a particular habitat, species complex, or single resource (either natural or cultural).
Examples: Focal-resource MPAs include many fisheries and cultural resource sites, including some national wildlife refuges and marine sanctuaries.

Primary Conservation Focus

Most MPAs have legally established goals, conservation objectives, and intended purpose(s). Common examples include MPAs created to conserve biodiversity in support of research and education; to protect benthic habitat in order to recover over-fished stocks; and to protect and interpret shipwrecks for maritime education. These descriptors of an MPA are reflected in the site's conservation focus, which represents the characteristics of the area that the MPA was established to conserve. The conservation focus, in turn, influences many fundamental aspects of the site, including its design, location, size, scale, management strategies and potential contribution to surrounding ecosystems. U.S. MPAs may have more than one conservation focus, but generally address one as a Primary Conservation Focus.

- **Natural Heritage (NH):** MPAs or zones established and managed wholly or in part to sustain, conserve, restore, and understand the protected area's natural biodiversity, populations, communities, habitats, and ecosystems; the ecological and physical processes upon which they depend; and, the ecological services, human uses and values they provide to this and future generations.
Examples: Natural Heritage MPAs include most national marine sanctuaries, national parks, national wildlife refuges, and many state MPAs.

- **Cultural Heritage (CH):** MPAs or zones established and managed wholly or in part to protect and understand submerged cultural resources that reflect the nation's maritime history and traditional cultural connections to the sea.
Examples: Cultural Heritage MPAs include some national marine sanctuaries, national and state parks, and national historic monuments.
- **Sustainable Production (SP):** MPAs or zones established and managed wholly or in part with the explicit purpose of supporting the continued extraction of renewable living resources (such as fish, shellfish, plants, birds, or mammals) that live within the MPA, or that are exploited elsewhere but depend upon the protected area's habitat for essential aspects of their ecology or life history (feeding, spawning, mating, or nursery grounds).
Examples: Sustainable Production MPAs include some national wildlife refuges and many federal and state fisheries areas, including those established to recover over-fished stocks, protect by-catch species, or protect essential fish habitats.

Fishing Restriction

MPAs may restrict fishing to achieve their conservation objectives.

- **No Restrictions to Fishing (NoRstr):** MPAs or zones place no restrictions on any type of fishing throughout the site, including both commercial and recreational.
- **All Fishing Prohibited (ProAll):** MPAs or zones prohibit any type of fishing throughout the site, including both commercial and recreational.
Example: No-take MPAs, which are relatively rare in the U.S., occurring mainly in state MPAs, in some federal areas closed for either fisheries management or the protection of endangered species, or as small special use (research) zones within larger multiple-use MPAs. Other commonly used terms to connote no-take MPAs include marine reserves or ecological reserves.
- **Commercial Fishing Prohibited (ComPro):** MPAs or zones prohibit any type of commercial fishing. Recreational fishing may be allowed.
Example: Year-round MPAs, including all marine sanctuaries, national parks, refuges, monuments, and some fisheries sites.
- **Recreational Fishing Prohibited (RecPro):** MPAs or zones prohibit any type of recreational fishing. Commercial fishing may be allowed.
Example: Permanent MPAs, including most national marine sanctuaries and all national parks.
- **All Fishing Restricted (ResAll):** MPAs or zones place some type of restriction on all types of fishing, including both commercial and recreational. The level of restriction may vary throughout the MPA according to different zones or areas.
Example: Zoned multiple-use MPAs, which are increasingly common in U.S. waters, including some marine sanctuaries, national parks, national wildlife refuges, and state MPAs.

- **Commercial Fishing Restricted (ComRes):** MPAs or zones place some type of restriction on commercial fishing, which might vary throughout the MPA according to different zones or areas. Recreational fishing may be unrestricted. *Example: Rotating MPAs, which are still rare in the U.S. They include some dynamic fisheries closures created for the purpose of serially recovering a suite of localized population to harvestable levels.*
- **Recreational Fishing Restricted (RecRes):** MPAs or zones place some type of restriction on recreational fishing, which might vary throughout the MPA according to different zones or areas. Commercial fishing may be unrestricted. *Example: Seasonal MPAs, including some fisheries and endangered species closures around sensitive habitats.*
- **Recreational Fishing Prohibited and Commercial Fishing Restricted (RecProComRes):** MPAs or zones prohibit any type of recreational fishing and place some type of restriction on commercial fishing. *Example: A Sanctuary that includes multiple zones or specified areas within which some areas recreational fishing is prohibited and commercial fishing is restricted.*
- **Commercial Fishing Prohibited and Recreational Fishing Restricted (ComProRecRes):** MPAs or zones prohibit any type of commercial fishing and place some type of restriction on recreational fishing. *Example: A Sanctuary that includes multiple zones or specified areas within which some areas commercial fishing is prohibited and recreational fishing is restricted.*
- **Unknown Restrictions to Fishing (Unknown):** Restrictions to fishing are unknown.

Management Plan Type

To be eligible for nomination to the national system, an MPA must have a management plan that has been developed at one of the following scales:

- a site-specific MPA management plan (SS),
- part of a larger MPA programmatic management plan (PR),
- component of a broader, non-MPA programmatic management plan (e.g., fishery management plan [FMP], species management plan [SMP] or habitat management plan [HMP]), or
- a verbal or written community agreement (CA)

DE = Designation. Management goals, monitoring and evaluation and other activities are listed in a designation document (e.g., state or federal law or regulation, Executive Order, etc.), rather than a separate management plan. This is considered to meet the management plan requirement.

D = Draft management plan. Considered to meet the management plan requirement.

P = Planned. Management plan is planned, but not yet in draft. Not considered to meet the management plan requirement.

N = no management plan.

The management plan must include both of the following components:

- a. specified conservation goals, and
- b. a process or requirement for monitoring and evaluation of goals.

Sites were considered to meet (a) above if they had one or more clearly stated goals, purposes, or objectives. This could include a statement in a management plan, or another document, such as the authorizing statute.

Sites were considered to meet (b) above if their plan authorizes or calls for monitoring their conservation goal. Not all elements of a site's conservation goals must be monitored to meet this criterion. For example, if the site conservation goal was ecosystem protection and water quality was being monitored, then a "yes" was indicated.

Monitoring may be done by the site or by any program associated with the goals or objectives of the site. For example, stock assessments conducted to evaluate the health of a fishery were considered to be monitoring for MPAs established to conserve or manage that fishery because they add to the scientific understanding of the contribution of the MPA to the health of that fishery. The MPA Center did not determine whether such monitoring and evaluation activities were actually occurring, only that they were called for in an official management plan or other site authority.

GIS Data

Note whether the MPA or site has available GIS data (Yes=have GIS data; No=no GIS data).

Vessel Access

Note whether the MPA or site allows vessel access (Yes=allows vessel access; Restricted=vessel access is restricted; No=vessel access is prohibited).

Anchoring

Note whether the MPA or site allows anchoring (Yes=allows anchoring; Restricted=anchoring is restricted; No=anchoring is prohibited).

BENEFITS

of a National System of Marine Protected Areas



The national system of MPAs provides the first comprehensive mechanism for coordinating MPAs managed by diverse federal, state, territorial, tribal and local agencies to work toward national conservation objectives. The system will benefit the nation's collective conservation efforts and participating MPAs, providing those sites with a means to address issues beyond their boundaries. The following list reflects some of the potential benefits from the creation and effective management of the national system.



Benefits to Participating MPAs

- **Enhancing Stewardship** - The national system will help protect MPAs against the harmful effects of activities through enhanced regional coordination, public awareness, site management capacity, and recognition of these MPAs as important conservation areas.
 - **Building Partnerships** - By establishing a mechanism for coordination around common conservation objectives, the national system provides opportunities for MPAs to work together more effectively. The system will also build partnerships between member MPAs and related ocean management initiatives, such as ocean observing systems, ocean mapping, navigational charting, and others.
-
- **Increasing Support for Marine Conservation** - The designation of MPAs as part of the national system can enhance the stature of these sites within their managing entities and their local communities, as well as nationally and internationally. This designation will also build support for investment in national system MPAs. National system MPAs may benefit from the same type of support and recognition that MPAs who joined international networks have received; such as the World Heritage Sites, Ramsar Wetlands, or other U.S. national level systems like the National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks and Wildlife Refuges.
 - **More Effective and Efficient Outreach** - The national system will be an important mechanism for increased public awareness and understanding of the importance of marine resources and conservation efforts. Coordinated outreach efforts will increase the impact of outreach by individual MPAs, and could result in cost savings. Including eligible, but currently little known, sites in the national system could bring increased recognition and visibility to these areas.
 - **Promoting Cultural Heritage** - Participation in the national system elevates and enhances the recognition of and appreciation for the cultural heritage value of MPA sites, an often overlooked focus of marine conservation.
 - **Protecting MPA Resources** - Section 5 of Executive Order 13158 calls for federal agencies to "avoid harm" to the natural and cultural resources protected by MPAs that are part of the national system. Federal agencies are required to identify their activities that affect the natural and cultural resources protected by individual national system MPAs, and, to the extent permitted by law and the maximum extent practicable, avoid harm to those resources. These activities are to be accomplished through existing resource management or review authorities.



Benefits to the Nation

- **Protecting Representative Ecosystems and Resources** - The national system will significantly boost ongoing efforts to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the United States by ensuring that the diverse characteristics of the nation's seas are conserved for future generations in a systematic way. The representation of all ecosystem or habitat types in all the nation's marine regions, which includes the Great Lakes, within a single system will help ensure a full complement of biodiversity, habitat types and representative cultural resources.



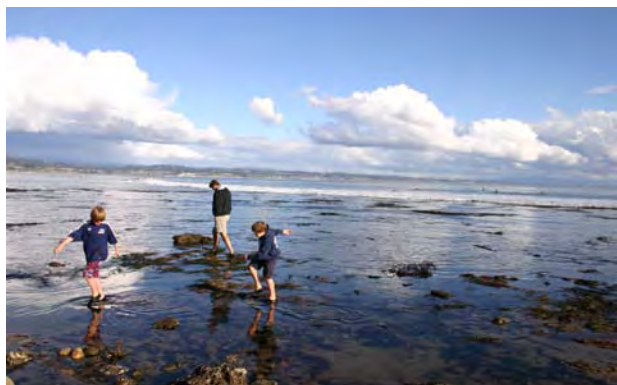
- **Enhancing Connectivity Among MPAs** - The national system provides an opportunity to identify and establish networks of MPAs that are ecologically connected. An ecological network of MPAs is a set of discrete MPAs within a region that are functionally connected through dispersal of eggs and larvae or movement of juveniles and adults. These networks would enhance linkages between sources and sinks for many marine organisms, which may be essential for some local populations to persist—an increasingly serious challenge in the face of climate change and other impacts. Planning and analysis at the national and regional scales provides an opportunity to address connectivity for many different marine organisms at different spatial scales.



- **Identifying Gaps in Current Protection of Ocean Resources** - The national system will help identify and highlight gaps in protection of important places where MPAs may be an appropriate tool to meet priority conservation objectives. Regional gap analyses will help inform future planning efforts to create MPAs to fill the identified gaps.
- **Providing New Educational Opportunities** - The creation of the national system will enhance opportunities for natural and cultural heritage education. This may include onsite education and interpretation, as well as classroom and web-based resources. The national system will be a valuable tool for educating students and visitors about the nation's diverse marine and coastal ecosystems and cultural resources. It will also provide a mechanism to share educational materials about resources or management approaches among MPAs.
- **Enhancing Research Opportunities** - The national system will provide scientists and managers with more opportunities to understand the dynamics of marine ecosystems and human interactions with them under different management regimes. Increased awareness of the national system may lead to additional funding for research.
- **Improved International Coordination** - By focusing on national objectives, and providing a comprehensive picture of the nation's MPA coverage and focus, the national system will promote more effective links with international MPA programs, encourage the exchange of expertise, and enhance conservation efforts across international boundaries.

Benefits to Ocean Stakeholders

- **Sustaining Fisheries** - One goal of the national system is supporting sustainable production of harvested marine resources. The national system provides a mechanism to coordinate fisheries management activities by regional fisheries management councils, inter-state fisheries commissions, states and tribes with other conservation efforts at the regional scale. This contributes to species recovery, spillover and seeding effects, habitat protection, conservation of old-growth age structure and genetic diversity, as well as providing improved information about access opportunities.
- **Transparent Process for MPA Planning** - The national system outlines a science-based, transparent process for identifying gaps in current protection where new or enhanced MPAs may be needed to address resource conservation needs. The national system does not provide any new authority for establishing or managing MPAs, but lays out design and implementation principles that will guide the development of the system. These include a commitment to balanced stakeholder involvement, respecting local and indigenous values, and adaptive management.
- **Better Planning for Diverse Ocean Uses** - Identifying national system MPAs, as well as identifying areas important for conservation through regional gap analyses, will help inform regional-scale planning and decision making associated with a wide range of ocean uses. This would also contribute to a more predictable regulatory environment for ocean industries.
- **Better Information on MPA Resources, Uses and Recreational Opportunities** - As part of the development of the national system, the MPA Center has developed a comprehensive database on the number, location and types of U.S. MPAs. This information will answer questions from visitors and other users, such as: "Where can I go fishing?" and "What is the purpose of my local MPA?"



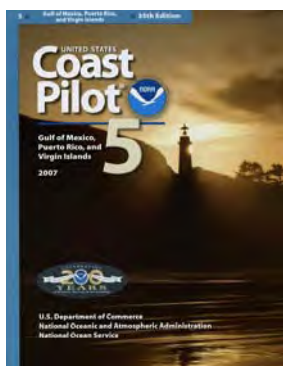
How the National System of MPAs Can Work for All of Us...

The National MPA Center is committed to focusing its efforts on projects and activities to strengthen MPAs and MPA programs, ocean and Great Lakes planning and management, and through them, the conservation of our Nation's natural and cultural marine heritage and the ecologically and economically sustainable use of the marine environment for future generations. Coordinated, cooperative work to achieve common conservation objectives is especially critical during these times of limited operating resources at all levels of government and the private sector. Priorities include:

- **Recognition for MPA Programs and Sites** - Recognition helps build public support for MPA programs. The national system will highlight participating MPA programs and sites on its web site, www.mpa.gov -- an internationally recognized resource for MPA information. Participating programs will also receive a Communications Toolkit to assist them in their outreach efforts, and the right to use the national system identity on materials related to participating MPAs.

How the National System of MPAs Can Work for All of Us... (cont'd)

- **Information for Regional Ocean Governance and MPA Planning and Management** - Information about protected areas, other closures, and ocean uses is critical for a wide range of ocean management decisions. The MPA Center has developed several national databases to address this need:
 - MPA Inventory - The only comprehensive national inventory of U.S. MPAs, the MPA Inventory includes information on nearly 1,700 U.S. MPAs, including GIS data for most sites.
 - "De Facto" MPA Inventory - Many areas are restricted for reasons other than conservation, such as military closures, safety zones, hazard areas and anchorages. The MPA Center has developed a national inventory of these federal "de facto" MPAs, which will be available on www.mpa.gov in 2009.
 - Ocean Uses Atlas - The MPA Center is developing a comprehensive atlas of consumptive and non-consumptive ocean uses for California, and is seeking partnerships to expand this work in other states and regions.
 - MPA Virtual Library - Maintained on www.mpa.gov, the MPA Virtual Library provides searchable citations, articles, web sites and conferences on a wide range of MPA management and design issues.



- **Integration with Ocean and Coastal Management Programs** - The national system provides an opportunity to enhance our collective conservation efforts through the integration of MPA programs with other ocean management programs with complementary goals. For example, the MPA Federal Advisory Committee is currently working on recommendations for integrating the national system with the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). The needs of the national system can help guide the future development of IOOS, and MPAs in the national system can serve as platforms for ocean observations. The MPA Center is also working with NOAA's Office of Coast Survey to include MPAs in navigational pockets for mariners and recreational users, such as Coast Pilot, Pocket Charts, and electronic navigational charts.

▪ **Facilitation of Regional Assessments and Gap Analyses** - Identifying conservation gaps is a critical step toward achieving the conservation objectives of the national system. These gaps are areas in the ocean and Great Lakes that meet the conservation objectives of the national system but are not adequately protected to ensure their long-term viability. The MPA Center will work collaboratively with partners in each region to complete a gap analysis for U.S. marine ecosystems. These gap analyses can be used by existing federal, state, territorial, tribal and local MPA programs and other ocean and coastal managers to guide future effort to establish new MPAs, strengthen existing ones, or take other protection measures. The gap analysis process will begin on the West Coast (California, Oregon and Washington) in 2009-10.

- **International Linkages to Address Issues of Common Concern** - The national system will help connect regional, state and territorial MPA efforts with relevant international initiatives to address issues of common concern. For example, the North American MPA Network, an initiative of the Commission on Environmental Cooperation (U.S., Canada and Mexico) has focused on the Baja to Bering region, and will begin work in other regions in 2009. Projects include developing common indicators and condition reports from MPAs across the three countries, identification of priority conservation areas, mapping marine ecosystems, training, and technical assistance and exchanges.



Joseph A. Uravitch
 Director, National MPA Center
Joseph.Uravitch@noaa.gov
 (301) 563-1195

Lauren Wenzel
 National System Development Coordinator
Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov
 (301) 563-1136

Dr. Charles Wahle
 Senior Scientist
Charles.Wahle@noaa.gov
 (831) 242-2052