



# NEWS FROM NOAA

## NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **COMMERCE'S NOAA AND INTERIOR DEPARTMENT RELEASE DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING SYSTEM OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

*Public Comment Period Open for 145 Days*

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of the Interior today jointly released a draft framework that outlines guidance for cooperative efforts to increase efficient protection of U.S. marine resources and develop the national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the United States.

The first effort of its kind in the nation, the framework describes a national system of MPAs built in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments as well as other stakeholders. The national goal is to increase efficient protection of U.S. marine resources by enhancing government agency cooperation, helping to sustain fisheries and maintain healthy marine ecosystems for tourism and recreation businesses, and improving public access to scientific information about the nation's marine resources.

The draft framework will be available for public comment for 145 days and can be found online at [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov).

"The Administration is firmly committed to sound management and effective conservation of our ocean and coastal resources," Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne stated in a jointly signed letter to governors. "The draft framework offers a proposal for working together at regional and national levels to support the effective use of marine protected areas and achieve common goals for conserving the nation's vital marine resources."

Crafted with input from the 30-member MPA federal advisory committee, state agencies, and the public, the framework proposes collaborative efforts for building the initial national system with existing MPAs. It also outlines guidance on building agency partnerships and engaging stakeholders to enhance MPA stewardship. These efforts are currently being tested on a regional level by government agencies on the west coast.

MPAs in the U.S. are managed by a host of federal, state, local and tribal agencies, including national marine sanctuaries, state parks, and national wildlife refuges. Under the proposed definition of "marine protected area" in the framework, the National Marine Protected Areas Center has initially identified about 1,500 marine conservation areas, managed by over 100 hundred agencies, that would likely qualify as MPAs under the proposed definition. Most of these areas were established after 1970, allow multiple uses, and are managed by state agencies. While the proposed definition includes areas ranging from those that allow fishing to areas closed to all uses, less than one percent of U.S. waters are currently set aside as no-take marine reserves.

The release of the draft framework is the result of comments received from a series of public dialogue meetings and federal, state, and tribal agency workshops; the MPA Federal Advisory Committee; fishery management councils; anglers; conservation organizations; the energy industry; commercial fishermen; coastal communities; scientists; divers; and others. Recommendations were provided to NOAA and the Department of the Interior in separate

written reports by the federal advisory committee and the states. The reports as well as comments and notes from public meetings can be found at [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov).

After the 145-day public comment period ends, the MPA Center will address all comments received, and begin working with government partners to establish the national system.

Executive Order 13158 was signed by President Clinton in May 2000, and endorsed by the Bush Administration in July 2001. It calls for "...a scientifically based, comprehensive national system of MPAs representing diverse U.S. marine ecosystems, and the Nation's natural and cultural resources." The President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan, released in 2005, outlines a variety of actions for promoting the responsible use and stewardship of ocean and coastal resources for the benefit of all Americans. These actions, which emphasize greater scientific and programmatic coordination between ocean agencies as well as those taken under the MPA Executive Order, complement one another and will be closely coordinated.

In 2007 NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. Starting with the establishment of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA. The agency is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts, and protects.

-30-

For more information online:

Department of Commerce - <http://www.doc.gov>

NOAA - <http://www.noaa.gov>

National Marine Protected Areas Center - <http://www.mpa.gov>

Department of the Interior - <http://www.doi.gov>