

MPA CONNECTIONS
Newsletter of the National
Marine Protected Areas Center

2006

The mission of the National Marine Protected Areas Center 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. MPA Connections was launched to meet continuing calls by agency and external stakeholders for information about MPA Center activities and to feature other actions that address Executive Order 13158 goals. The MPA Center is a division of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE
NATIONAL MARINE PROTECTED AREAS CENTER

Many of you will notice that this is the first edition of MPA Connections published in 2006. The unexpected reduction in the MPA Center's budget for this year, below the President's request, has led us to re-consider our priorities as well as make some staff reductions. Our priorities for the year include: publishing the draft framework for the national system of MPAs; advancing the science and governmental coordination work of the west coast pilot project; supporting the MPA Federal Advisory Committee; and continuing to provide the public and agencies easy access to information through the MPA.gov website and publications. In the midst of having to do more with less, we made the decision to offer this newsletter on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, beginning with this issue. You'll still find it chock full of good information, and we believe the quality of the newsletter remains very high.

You'll read in this issue that we have just released the national system framework for a 145-day public comment period. We are pleased that Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez and Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne have signed a joint letter of support for the framework to governors and tribal representatives. The framework is the result of a tremendous amount of cooperation between and solid input from federal and state/territory agencies, tribes, the MPA Federal Advisory Committee, fishery management councils, scientists, coastal communities, anglers, commercial fishermen, industry representatives, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders. The document offers guidance on how government agencies might work collaboratively to begin creating the national system based on existing MPAs, and outlines how to build agency partnerships and engage stakeholders to enhance MPA stewardship. Please read the article in this issue to learn how you can access the framework and send us comments.

The MPA Center has been called upon to take a leadership role in many international MPA activities. One of these activities has involved working closely with our counterparts in Mexico and Canada, via the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, to develop the North American MPA Network. A recent activity associated with this project has been to synthesize information about the three nations' MPA monitoring programs and develop a Pacific coast MPA monitoring network to be implemented through "sister" sites in each nation. You may contact me directly if you'd like to learn more about this and other international MPA efforts.

Before I close, I'd like to formally welcome David M. Kennedy, the new director of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, which is the NOAA umbrella organization for the MPA Center. David began his leadership position in May. Many of you will know him from his previous role as director of NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration, in which capacity he served for eight years. We are excited about his enthusiasm for and dedication to our program.

Finally, please keep an eye out for changes to the MPA.gov website. We are working on a new design and navigation, and updating our content. We think you'll like the improvements. We expect to re-launch the site in October.

Enjoy this edition of MPA Connections.

--Contact Joe Uravitch at joseph.uravitch@noaa.gov.

NOAA AND DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR RELEASE DRAFT FRAMEWORK FOR
DEVELOPING U.S. SYSTEM OF MPAs
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.

"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.

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.

For more information:

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>

CLARIFYING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT MARINE PROTECTED AREAS: An Occasional Series from the MPA Center

Misconception:

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are not essential components of ecosystem approaches to marine management.

Reality:

MPAs are an important component of an ecosystem approach. In fact, they are being used to rebuild fisheries, protect endangered species, conserve vital habitats, preserve biological diversity and cultural resources, and balance human uses of the ecosystem to reduce conflicts. Like other tools for effective ecosystem-based management, MPAs are successful when they are well designed, planned, implemented, and managed.

Over the last several years, the concept of an ecosystem approach to ocean and coastal marine management has been adopted by many management agencies because it encompasses humans, their environment, and the processes that control ecosystem dynamics. This “big picture” concept goes beyond protecting a certain species or habitat, and allows managers to more effectively address conservation from a holistic viewpoint. An ecosystem approach to management ensures that all aspects of a marine ecosystem are linked to sustaining healthy marine resources for future generations.

According to a popular definition of ecosystem approaches to management by the COMPASS Scientific Consensus Statement of Marine Ecosystem-Based Management from March 2005, an ecosystem approach to management:

- emphasizes the protection of ecosystem structure, functioning, and key processes;
- is place-based in focusing on a specific ecosystem and the range of activities affecting it;
- explicitly accounts for the interconnectedness within systems (such as the interactions between harvested species and non-target species);
- acknowledges interconnectedness among air, land, and sea; and
- integrates ecological, social, and institutional perspectives.

Government agencies use an array of tools when adopting an ecosystem approach to management. Because marine protected areas are place-based, like ecosystem approaches to management, they are often a component of this approach. For example, NOAA Fisheries may work with a regional fishery management council to develop special regulations for a habitat of particular concern; a state park may collaborate with a variety of local partners to restore an estuary or its watershed; or a national marine sanctuary may mount an education campaign to reduce impacts from boaters or divers on sensitive habitats.

To read about other articles in the “Clarifying Misconceptions about MPAs” series, go to http://mpa.gov/information_tools/pdf/Factsheets/mpamisconceptions2.pdf.

MPA CENTER PARTNERS WITH WEST COAST GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO PILOT DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAs

In recent months, the MPA Center has been planning a multi-year strategy to engage government and non-government stakeholders on the west coast (California, Oregon, and Washington) to pilot key methods and approaches for designing and managing an effective regional system of MPAs. A result of this effort was a kick-off event in Monterey, Calif., with government agency partners at the federal, state, and tribal level to begin defining regional MPA goals, challenges, and opportunities. The main focus of this two-day conference was to outline best practices and identify ways agencies might collaborate to create a regional, complementary system of existing MPAs.

The lessons this pilot project offers will provide a foundation for other regional MPA planning. It will also provide insight for numerous ecosystem-based management efforts that require the same level of comprehensive information to aid in decision-making.

Participants at the initial conference in Monterey discussed a variety of issues to help guide follow-up activities for the pilot. Some of these outcomes included shared information about purposes and potential effects of place-based management, and strategies on how to enhance the effectiveness of regional MPA efforts. Participants identified initial steps for improving coordination, enhancing stewardship, and identifying future conservation areas, and came away with enthusiasm about working toward common goals and a clearer understanding of the benefits of both a regional and national system of MPAs. A workshop report and draft regional action plan will be developed by a smaller group of participants over the coming months.

The MPA Center's partners in NOAA on this project are the National Marine Sanctuary Program, the National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science Biogeography Program, and Fisheries. The MPA Center is also working closely with the Department of the Interior (National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), other federal agencies, state agencies, and tribal governments.

A section on www.MPA.gov is being developed to track the progress of the West Coast Pilot. In the meantime, if you would like to learn more about the MPA Center's efforts to develop the national system of MPAs, go to www.MPA.gov/national_system.

MPA CENTER EXPLORES HUMAN USE PATTERNS AND IMPACTS AND MPAs

Human communities are tied to marine environments in many ways. The coasts and oceans provide people with numerous goods and services that meet social, cultural, and economic needs. For example, fish and shellfish are harvested for subsistence, commercial, and recreational use; waterways provide for commerce, trade, and navigation; natural resources are essential for energy production, construction, and scientific research; and people look to our waters for tourism, leisure, and spiritual and cultural renewal. Understanding how people use coastal and ocean environments is a critical need for ecosystem approaches to management. The way people interact with the marine environment has implications for the health and well-being of both the human communities and the resources on which they depend.

Understanding the human dimension of the marine environment is a critical need in ecosystem-based management. Documenting patterns of use, for example, is important for determining areas and resource characteristics that may be at risk and in need of further protection, as well as for understanding the social, economic, and cultural values associated with uses and the potential impacts of management measures on human communities. Data on human uses of the marine environment is especially important for the planning, management, and evaluation of marine protected areas (MPAs). Siting MPAs requires a careful consideration of the sources and intensities of human and non-human threats to resources, as well as the concerns among user groups for continued access and sustained participation in consumptive and non-consumptive use patterns.

Marine protected area management often necessitates balancing access needs among multiple and at times competing user groups. This need, coupled with a concern for the effects of displacement, and consideration of the ecological and socioeconomic connectivity among and

between places at sea, watersheds, and shore-side communities, highlights the importance of employing sound data on use patterns in the planning, management, and evaluation of MPAs.

The MPA Center's human use patterns and impacts project is one of the scientific assessments of the west coast pilot (see previous article). The goal of the project is to develop a broadly applicable method for identifying the patterns, intensities, and socioeconomic significance of human uses of the marine environment. The application of the method will yield data on human activities that may be used to assess the potential impact of uses on key resource variables, analyze the compatibility among uses, and to determine the socioeconomic value and significance of the activities. The results of the project will be integrated with findings from other scientific assessments in order to provide a baseline of information for future efforts to identify gaps in management and high priority sites for area-based coastal and ocean management.

The project will also identify the categories of user groups that need to be engaged through participatory management processes, user conflicts and equity issues that may need to be addressed, and potential socioeconomic impacts of management alternatives. The MPA Center will develop products that will include:

- a methodological process and guidelines for documenting human use patterns in marine ecosystems
- a synthesis of secondary data on spatial patterns of human activities in the pilot region
- tools for storing, analyzing, and presenting use data
- tools for assessing the compatibilities among and potential impacts of human uses

For more information about the MPA Center's human use patterns and impacts project, visit our website: http://mpa.gov/information_tools/social_science.html.

ANGLERS AND SCIENTISTS DISCUSS BENEFITS OF BENTHIC-PELAGIC MPA LINKAGES

A relatively new concept in managing fishing MPAs is through the use of "vertical zoning." This type of zoning restricts fishing to an MPA's upper waters, or the pelagic area. Most MPAs that have restrictions on fishing generally base those restrictions on the benthic element, or bottom of the waters.

Pursuing a vertical zoning management strategy depends on the scope of the MPA's conservation objectives, the degree to which its benthic and pelagic communities are linked ecologically and are vulnerable to fishing, and the MPA's ability to monitor and enforce complex fishing restrictions.

Because this is such a recent area of study, the MPA Center decided to gather a group of anglers, fisheries scientists, marine ecologists, and MPA practitioners to discuss it in more detail. The theme of the workshop was to explore the benthic-pelagic linkages in MPA design and the application of science to vertical zoning approaches.

The group of experts openly shared their knowledge about identifying the conditions under which recreational fishing for pelagic species could occur within an MPA while not

compromising the sites' goals for conserving benthic habitats. The participants worked collaboratively to develop some general assessments of the strengths and significance of benthic-pelagic linkages in different U.S. ecosystems, and to create the foundation for guidelines for managers seeking to effectively and equitably manage multiple human uses in MPAs. They recommended that vertical zoning of fishing might be appropriate to consider in areas with weak and indirect benthic-pelagic linkages, where pelagic fishing may not impact protected benthic communities. In contrast, vertical zoning might not be an appropriate management design in areas with strong and direct benthic-pelagic linkages, where pelagic fish prey heavily upon benthic or mid-water species.

Finally, for the many areas in which the nature, direction, strength, and predictability of the benthic-pelagic linkages are poorly understood, a more precautionary and adaptive approach to MPA design might be most appropriate to adopt, pending additional scientific information about the site.

By identifying the general circumstances in which we may know enough to evaluate the advisability of using vertical zoning of fishing to design and manage benthic-focused MPAs, these scientists, anglers, and managers overcame significant differences in experience and perspective on an important and contentious marine policy issue. Ongoing follow-up actions include developing a more detailed scientific publication, organizing a scientific working group to address the emerging research needs on benthic-pelagic linkages, and working with the recreational fishing community to develop best practices for low impact pelagic fishing by, and for, fishermen. Ultimately, the MPA Center hopes that the workshop's results, and the subsequent efforts that it has already generated, will help inform a new direction of science-based collaboration in MPA policy deliberations in the United States and abroad.

**The article was written by MPA Center staff--Charles Wahle, Rikki Grober-Dunsmore, and Lisa Wooninck--for the Vol. 7, No. 8 issue of MPA News, published in March 2006. To subscribe to MPA News, or read archived issues, go to <http://depts.washington.edu/mpanews/>.

SPOTLIGHT ON ENHANCING RESEARCH & PUBLIC OUTREACH: NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVES MANAGED BY UNIVERSITIES

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) is a network of 27 estuarine sites representing diverse biogeographic regions of the U.S. The system was established by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, and is a partnership between NOAA and coastal states, with NOAA providing funding and national guidance. Daily management of the sites is carried out by local partners and a state agency or university.

National estuarine research reserves are unique in that they are federally created to enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas, and provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation. This makes the reserves one of only four NOAA programs in which public education is federally mandated, the others being the National Marine Sanctuary Program, the Sea Grant Program, and the Coral Reef Conservation Program.

Of the 27 sites in the NERR system, five are managed by universities. They include the San Francisco Bay Reserve, managed by San Francisco State University; the Mission-Aransas

Reserve, managed by the University of Texas; the North Inlet–Winyah Bay Reserve, managed by University of South Carolina; the Chesapeake Bay Reserve in Virginia, managed by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at the College of William and Mary; and the Jacques Cousteau Reserve, managed by Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

With a system so intertwined with education and research, university management has considerable benefits. Janice McDonnell, program specialist at the Jacques Cousteau NERR in Tuckerton, New Jersey, believes one of the primary advantages of the reserve’s affiliation with Rutgers is her access to resources when designing programs, which, at Jacques Cousteau, are centered on teacher education. The Jacques Cousteau NERR coordinates workshops so that while there are several schools represented, there are at least three-to-five teachers from the same school. Throughout the school year, Jacques Cousteau runs follow-up programs for these teachers. By doing so, the NERR systematically directs their resources to reach an entire school, as opposed to an individual. The interaction between teachers and current scientists is critical to the professional development of the educators.

“Current teachers can use the Jacques Cousteau NERR to connect with expert scientists and learn from them personally about their research” McDonnell says. “Through attending workshops and programs, teachers are able to incorporate this knowledge into their own lessons.” McDonnell is able to design a NERR program for the teachers based on science, as opposed to interpretation, due to the resources she has at Rutgers.

Sarah Davies, education coordinator at the San Francisco Bay NERR, agrees. Twice during each year, the San Francisco Bay NERR runs teacher workshops in which four-to-eight scientists from the reserve’s university partner interact directly with science teachers during lectures and field experiences. This allows the NERR to provide a significant and unique opportunity for teachers to become familiar with the cutting edge research being conducted by top notch scientists. The teachers can then bring this knowledge into their classrooms.

“This is a very valuable, direct connection that helps teachers create authentic, exciting lessons that might inspire students to become estuarine scientists,” Davies says.

While the primary benefit of a NERR affiliation with a university is in the area of research, the education and public outreach programs are also enhanced.

“Being located at a field laboratory that attracts scientists and other faculty from the University of South Carolina and dozens of other academic institutions not only strengthens the scientific programs, but indirectly, our education and outreach programs, many of which feature the science conducted here,” Wendy Allen, North Inlet–Winyah Bay NERR manager in South Carolina, says. She notes that access to scientists in the education program has proven to be very beneficial to the quality of the program.

Robert Carroll, general education and public outreach coordinator for the Chesapeake Bay NERR in Virginia, commented that having the Chesapeake Bay NERR located in two buildings on the campus of the Virginia Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences (VIMS) has its advantages.

“It puts us in touch with everything going on at VIMS,” Carroll says. “In addition to knowing about current research, it is an unbelievable asset when marketing our education programs.”

Students appreciate that the VIMS is located on the William and Mary campus, and this generates interest in the NERRS programs. The Chesapeake Bay NERR focuses predominantly on student programs, rather than teacher education workshops. It coordinates 50-60 field trips a year for students, and goes into classrooms about 50 days a year to educate students.

Carroll, like his NERRS counterparts at Rutgers University, San Francisco State University, and University of South Carolina, commented that it is easy to access experts at the university, which enhances the programs he coordinates. This summer, for example, Carroll assembled a five-day workshop on blue crabs, in which high school students learned from presentations from four experts at VIMS and were also able to interact with graduate students.

“Access to these researchers is an outstanding opportunity for high schools students to experience,” Carroll says. “I work to have VIMS graduate students make presentations during summer programs for high school students. This audience really tunes into the energy and enthusiasm the graduate students have for their work, and the high school students leave with a solid understanding of what a masters thesis or PhD dissertation project entails.”

Matt Chasse, who serves as a program specialist for the newly designated Mission–Aransas NERR in Texas, stated that the perception of the reserve being run by a university can be advantageous. He commented that when NERRS are regulated by state agencies, the agency can often be perceived as solely regulatory, while universities may be able to connect better with the public.

“The Texas General Lands Office, or the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality make environmental policies, while the University of Texas, or any other university, is not noted as a public land manager,” Chasse says. “This can create a positive perception about the NERR within the local communities near the reserve.”

Another advantage universities have is that they are not a rulemaking body, and research conducted at the NERR can assist rulemaking entities by providing good data. Sally Applebaum, assistant manager of the Mission-Aransas NERR, pointed out that universities can provide the best available unbiased information, which can have positive impacts on coastal management decisions. This enables reserves managed by universities to complete objective research without being subject to the criticism that is sometimes associated with agencies that have a regulatory role.

Essentially, these five universities have eminent scientists and marine labs, as well as research funds, making management of the respective NERRS a logical responsibility. In addition, NERRS and research universities share common objectives in research and education.

While university management may not be the optimal route for every NERR designation, it does offer significant benefits, such as its student, teacher, family, or decision-maker workshops, and other programs. Finally, a NERR managed by a university can connect with the general public in a way that regulatory agencies may not be able to.

*This article was written by Maureen A. Wagner, who was an intern at the National Marine Protected Areas Center. Maureen is an undergraduate at Rutgers University, Cook College. She will graduate with a bachelor of science degree in May 2007. She wrote this article as part of her senior thesis project.

MPA CENTER RELEASES PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF MARINE MANAGED AREAS INVENTORY

Since 2001, a variety of federal, state, and territory agencies have been helping the MPA Center to collect comprehensive information about the nation's marine managed areas (MMAs). This information has been available via a database on the MPA.gov website throughout the process. While some data are still being compiled, such as information on tribal MMAs, most of the federal and state/territory data are complete. The MPA Center has begun a thorough analysis of the existing data and has published some initial results that provide a sound picture of the nation's conservation areas.

The data reveals that there are more than 1,500 MMAs established in the United States, managed by more than 100 government agencies. Most MMA sites (90 percent) permit multiple uses, such as fishing and boating. The majority are established and managed by state agencies, and most of the sites are permanent and provide year-round protection. Finally, the majority of existing MMAs were established after 1970.

The MPA Center continues to work with tribes to include relevant data about their MMA sites. It also continues to analyze the data, and will publish more results in a brochure that can be downloaded from the MPA website.

The results of this analysis will tell a complete story about the location, management, purpose, and type of protection of existing MMAs. This information, the first of its kind in the nation, will form a cornerstone for developing the national system of marine protected areas, which the MPA Center is tasked with doing under its Executive Order.

To learn more, go to <http://mpa.gov/inventory/inventory.html>.

UPDATES ON THE MPA FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In April, Commerce secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez, in consultation with the Department of the Interior, appointed five new members to the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee, and reappointed 22 members to two- and four-year terms. Three vacancies remain to be filled on the advisory panel.

“We are pleased by the consensus-building efforts that the committee has pursued, and look forward to continued strong leadership as the members begin new terms,” Secretary Gutierrez said. “These individuals play a crucial role in helping us determine how best to balance marine conservation needs with commercial and recreational interests for present and future generations.”

During the committee's most recent meeting in April in Corpus Christi, Texas, they re-elected their chair and vice-chair and formed new subcommittees. The three new subcommittees are:

Identifying Regional Priorities for Conservation; Incentives and Implementation for an Effective National System of MPAs; and MPA Natural and Social Science.

The MPA Federal Advisory Committee will hold its next meeting from October 10-12, 2006, in Newport, Oregon. For more information, go to <http://mpa.gov/fac/fac.html>.

COASTAL STATES ORGANIZATION DELIVERS MPA SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS TO NOAA AND DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

In early May 2006, the Coastal States Organization and the Marine Protected Area State Advisory Group formally submitted their “Recommendations for State and Territorial Participation in the National System of Marine Protected Areas” to NOAA and the Department of the Interior.

The report represents a collaborative effort over the past few years between state and territorial coastal, fisheries, and cultural resource agency representatives, the Coastal States Organization, the National Marine Protected Area Center. It is intended to assist NOAA and the Department of the Interior in recognizing and promoting full state involvement in designating and managing the national system of MPAs by offering recommendations representing states’ interests and concerns.

Comments from this report have informed the draft framework for the national system of MPAs, which has just been released for a 145-day public comment period.

To read the recommendations, go to http://mpa.gov/national_system/pdf/state-mpa-report042106.pdf.

NOAA OFFICE OF COAST SURVEY AND MPA CENTER PARTNER TO ENHANCE SAFE NAVIGATION IN ALASKA WATERS

In order to promote safe navigation and enhance marine conservation, NOAA’s Office of Coast Survey and the National Marine Protected Areas Center have partnered to publish key information about the location, purpose, and allowable activities of existing marine managed areas off Alaska’s southeastern coast in the United States *Coast Pilot* Volume 8. The U.S. *Coast Pilot* is used by the maritime industry, fishermen, the military, recreational boaters, and other coastal users of sensitive marine ecosystems.

The southeastern Alaska edition includes marine managed areas between Dixon Entrance and Cape Spencer. It’s the first in a series of *Coast Pilot* publications being produced for all regions throughout the United States. The other eight books of the U.S. *Coast Pilot* series will be published over the next year, and contain similar information about marine managed areas. The maritime community relies heavily on the U.S. *Coast Pilot* and NOAA navigational charts for information about coastal issues relating to safe navigation, access to marine facilities, and environmental regulations.

“By incorporating marine managed areas into the nation’s U.S. *Coast Pilot* series, we are making sure that mariners have access to the most up-to-date information about the use of these areas,” said Oren Stembel, Chief of Coast Pilot Branch. “This is the first comprehensive effort to include important environmental information about sensitive or protected habitats in the Coast Pilot. NOAA’s Office of Coast Survey is looking forward to continuing our partnership with the National Marine Protected Areas Center to help mariners safely navigate U.S. waters, while helping protect our nation’s marine resources.”

The U.S. *Coast Pilot* has been in continuous print by the federal government since 1867. Ships of 1,600 or more gross tons, and large U.S. Naval vessels, are required to carry both the U.S. *Coast Pilot* and the local NOAA charts that pertain to their area of transit. Many smaller vessels also carry both the U.S. *Coast Pilot* and local NOAA charts, although they are not required to do so.

The U.S. *Coast Pilot* is a series of nine regional books. Each U.S. *Coast Pilot* contains a variety of information important to navigators of coastal and intra-coastal waters, and the Great Lakes. Each book also contains supplemental information that is difficult to portray on a nautical chart. Examples of topics covered in each U.S. *Coast Pilot* include channel descriptions, anchorages, bridge and cable clearances, currents, tide and water levels, prominent features, pilotage, towage, weather, ice conditions, wharf descriptions, dangers, routes, traffic separation schemes, small-craft facilities, and federal regulations applicable to navigation. The marine managed areas project now ensures that key environmental features are described as well.

To learn more about the partnership, go to http://mpa.gov/virtual_library/Publications/nav-mma-doc-2mb.pdf.

NOAA LAUNCHES REVISED WEBSITE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT

The Department of Commerce’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has launched a new website focusing on coastal management.

The site contains several new features and expanded information on issues addressed under the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. One new feature is a “My State” area, which allows visitors to easily find up-to-date information on coastal management activity underway in the nation’s 35 coastal states and territories. The new site also includes a wealth of information on key issues faced by coastal states, ranging from aquaculture to water quality.

The website, www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov, also includes ocean and coastal educational information, NOAA-conducted evaluations of state and territory coastal programs, funding information, and links to websites maintained by each state and territory.

The coastal management website is managed by NOAA’s Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE MPA ELECTRONIC LIBRARY

The MPA Virtual Library has taken steps to improve the organization of its records. The records have been arranged into theme bins that include: Introduction to MPAs, MPA Management, MPA Design, Effectiveness, Enforcement, Fisheries, Monitoring, Cultural Resources, Marine Managed Areas, Policy & Legal Analysis, MPA Science, Stakeholder Participation, MPA Systems and Networks, Challenges & Issues, International, Education & Public Awareness, and Social Science/Economics. The library now contains more than 1,750 records. To browse these theme categories, go to http://www3.mpa.gov/mpa_lib/themebins.aspx.

Note: the MPA Center does not necessarily endorse the views expressed in these articles.

- A proclamation by President George W. Bush establishes the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument, providing a high level of protection for nearly 140,000 square miles of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands area. Bush, George W., "Establishment of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument: A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America". Washington, D.C.: The White House, June 15, 2006.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060615-18.html>
- A report by the Interagency Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management Integration of the Council on Environmental Quality's Committee on Ocean Policy provides highlights of key federal activities, collaborative efforts, and progress made in federal ocean, coastal and Great Lakes programs, including discussion of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force's efforts to improve the use of coral reef protected areas, and marine protected areas as a component of the NOAA National Ocean Service's ocean and coastal resource management activities. Council on Environmental Quality, Committee on Ocean Policy, Interagency Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management Integration, "Federal Ocean and Coastal Activities Report to the U.S. Congress". Washington, D.C.: Council on Environmental Quality, December 2005.
<http://ocean.ceq.gov/Fedoceancoastal.pdf>
- A report issued by the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOCI) addresses the top ten actions they believe Congress should take to implement the recommendations made by two ocean commissions; the highest priorities for funding needed to support development and implementation of ocean policies consistent with these recommendations; and priority changes to law and the federal budget process needed to establish a more effective and integrated ocean and coastal governance approach. Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, "From Sea to Shining Sea: Priorities for Ocean Policy Reform: Report to the United States Senate". Washington, D.C.: Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, June 2006.
http://www.jointoceancommission.org/press/press/release0613_assets/seareport.pdf
- A new report in the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Report and Studies Series summarizes facts and options for conservation and sustainable use of marine habitats and life forms in deep waters and the open ocean. United Nations Environment Programme, "Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Deep Waters and High Seas". Gland, Switzerland: UNEP / IUCN, 2006.
http://www.iucn.org/en/news/archive/2006/06/16_unep_high_seas_lr.pdf

- A special feature on MPA management effectiveness evaluations addresses why these evaluations are important; mechanisms for evaluating MPAs; benefits of evaluations; what it means for an MPA to be a success; and how to choose the best evaluation method for a particular site. MPA News, "Special Feature: Measurement of Management Effectiveness: The Next Major Stage in MPAs?", MPA News 7, 10 (May 2006): 1-4. <http://depts.washington.edu/mpanews/MPA74.pdf>
- A new state of the reserve report provides a summary of progress toward implementation of the Reserve Operations Plan and the activities and accomplishments of NOAA's Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP), "State of the Reserve: Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve, 2000-2005". Silver Spring, MD: NOAA NMSP, February 2006. <http://www.hawaiiireef.noaa.gov/PDFs/SOR.pdf>
- The proceedings of the second conference in a series designed to improve management of marine fisheries in the U.S. focus on the challenges of regional fishery management programs; key issues for reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy; ecosystem-based management and fishery science; and marine protected areas to protect deep-water corals. Witherell, David (ed.), "Managing Our Nation's Fisheries II: Focus on the Future: Proceedings of a Conference on Fisheries Management in the United States held in Washington, D.C., March 24-26, 2005". Anchorage, AK: NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, North Pacific Fishery Management Council, 2005. http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/misc_pub/ManagingFisheries05.pdf

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