

# THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAs:

# PRIORITY CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

[www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov)

The framework for a comprehensive, science-based and effective national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) in U.S. waters was recently released by NOAA and the Department of the Interior. The national system will include eligible existing MPAs across all levels of government, as well as those established in the future by agencies to protect important habitats and resources.

## NATIONAL SYSTEM PRIORITY CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

To ensure the National System of MPAs supports the conservation of our nation's natural and cultural marine heritage and sustainable production marine resources, overarching conservation objectives for the national system were developed.

The conservation objectives were developed and prioritized with input and recommendations of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) and other stakeholders. When prioritizing each objective, the following were considered:

1. the availability of existing scientific or other data necessary to achieve the objective
2. the importance of the objective
3. the effort necessary to achieve the objective

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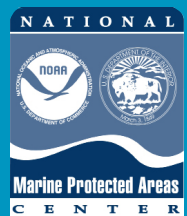
Prioritization of these conservation objectives are intended to guide the development of the comprehensive national system, including identification of both existing MPAs to be included, and conservation gaps which might be addressed through the establishment of new MPAs.

Building the national system will begin focused on a subset of the highest priority (near-term) objectives for each of the national system's three goals:

- **Natural Heritage:** 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.
- **Cultural Heritage:** 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 value they provide to present and future generations through ecosystem-based MPA approaches
- **Sustainable Production:** 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.

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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.



## NATURAL HERITAGE OBJECTIVES

### NEAR TERM

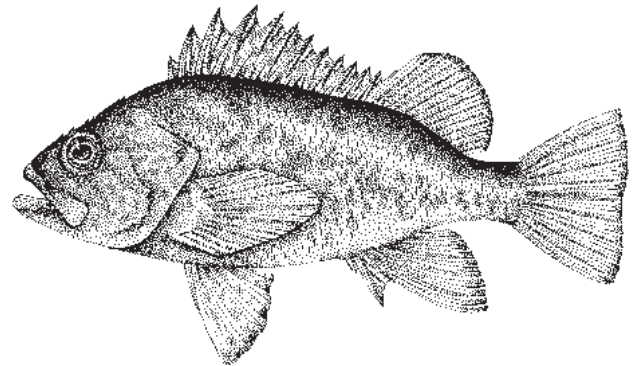
#### *Conserve and manage:*

- Key reproduction areas and nursery grounds
- Key biogenic habitats
- Areas of high species and/or high diversity
- Ecologically important geological features and enduring/recurring oceanographic features
- Critical habitat of threatened and endangered species

### LONGER TERM

#### *Conserve and manage:*

- Unique or rare species, habitats and associated communities
- Key areas for migratory species
- Linked areas important to life histories
- Key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research



## SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION OBJECTIVES

### NEAR TERM

#### *Conserve and manage:*

- Key reproduction areas, including larval sources and nursery grounds
- Key areas that sustain or restore high priority fishing grounds

### LONGER TERM

#### *Conserve and manage:*

- Key areas for maintaining natural age/sex structure of important harvestable species
- Key foraging grounds
- Key areas that mitigate the impacts of bycatch
- Conserve key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research

## CULTURAL HERITAGE OBJECTIVES

### NEAR TERM

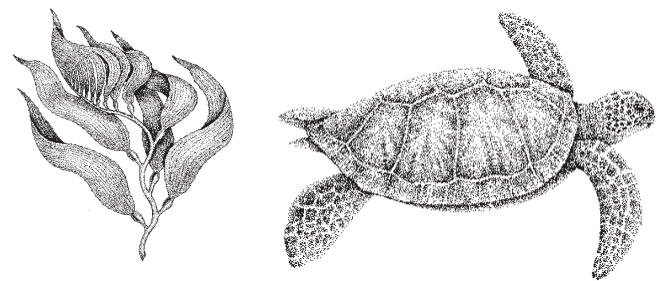
#### *Conserve and manage:*

- Key cultural and historic resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
- Key cultural historic resources determined eligible for the NRHP or listed on a State Register
- Key cultural sites that are paramount

### LONGER TERM

#### *Conserve and manage:*

- Key cultural and historic sites that may be threatened
- Key cultural and historic sites that can be utilized for heritage tourism
- Key cultural and historic sites that are under-represented



For more information on the priority conservation objectives, and on the National System of MPAs, visit [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov)

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