

SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCILS

Connecting to Communities

Sanctuary Advisory Councils are community-based advisory groups established to provide advice and recommendations to the superintendent of a national marine sanctuary. All fourteen sites in the sanctuary system have a Sanctuary Advisory Council; the first Council was established in 1990. Individuals that serve their communities and sanctuaries as members of Sanctuary Advisory Councils and council working groups and subcommittees represent a wide range of perspectives and experiences. Council members include fishers, divers, teachers, boaters, business people, activists, protected area managers, scientists, and elected officials.

Participating in Sanctuary Management

Sanctuary Advisory Councils provide advice about sanctuary operations and projects, including education and outreach, research and science, regulations and enforcement, and management planning. They are particularly critical in helping a sanctuary during its designation or management plan review process. Sanctuary Advisory Councils may establish additional working groups and subcommittees to help get their work done; working groups and subcommittees meet throughout the year. The most common working groups and subcommittees are those for conservation, education and research. Often working groups are created to help address a specific issue or project, and are disbanded after their missions have been accomplished. Council members provide expertise on both the local community and sanctuary resources, strengthen connections with the community, and help build increased stewardship for sanctuary resources.

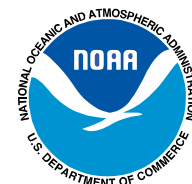


Sanctuary Advisory Council Members participate in a public meeting as part of the Joint Review Management Plan in California.



A Channel Islands Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting.

Approximately 425 individuals (members and alternates) serve on sanctuary advisory councils. The members and their working groups volunteer approximately 25,000 hours of their time each year.





Supporting Council Activities

Sanctuary Advisory Councils are an integral component of site management and a key connection to local communities. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries strongly supports our Sanctuary Advisory Councils and their working groups through staff support, holding local council meetings, hosting an annual Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit, and coordination across the sanctuary system through our National Advisory Council Coordinator.

Independent assessments of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and sanctuary advisory councils have concluded that the councils are working well.

- A 2006 University of Michigan study found the ONMS council experience to be valuable for both the individual council member and the constituent group they represent. They found councils to be effective due to the individuals involved, the well-run council meetings, the adaptability and flexibility of the council processes, the fact that councils are involved in substantive aspects of sanctuary management and ONMS's commitment and support.
- A 2006 National Academy of Public Administration report stated that sanctuaries have demonstrated they can work closely with advisory councils, working groups, and the public, during management plan reviews and recommended the program should “continue to involve advisory councils and working groups in revising management plans.”
- A 2008 Department of Commerce, Office of Inspector General report highlighted sanctuary advisory councils in three of their nineteen recommendations. Recommending council processes be utilized to improve communications and understanding between agencies, further underlines the value of the collaborative nature of sanctuary advisory councils.