



OFFICE OF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES

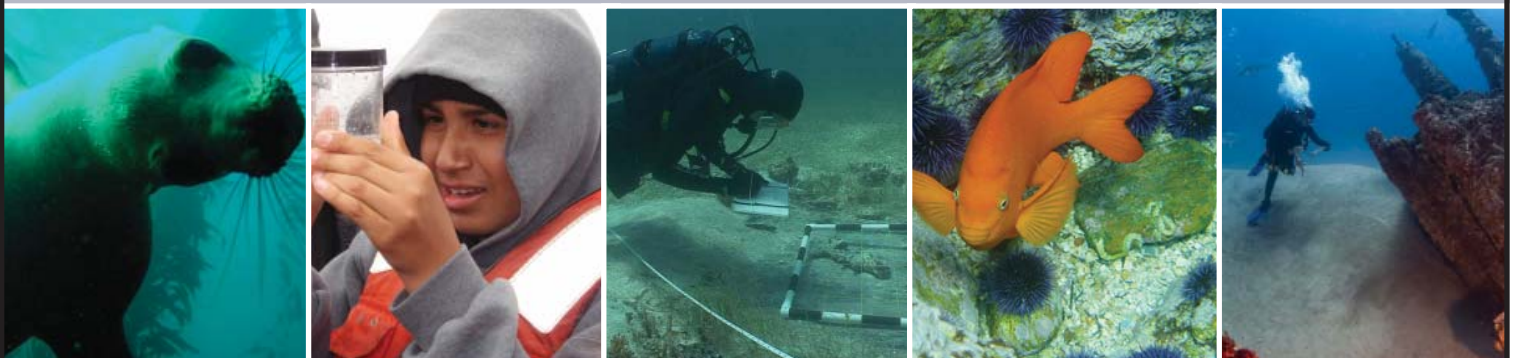
highlights

The OFFICE OF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES (ONMS) protects and manages 13 sanctuaries and one marine national monument encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of U.S. ocean. Important habitats like breeding and feeding grounds, coral reefs, kelp forests, and historical shipwrecks are represented within the system of sanctuaries.

During fiscal year 2008, ONMS worked with the public and Federal, State, and local officials to promote conservation while allowing compatible commercial and recreational activities. Increasing public awareness of our Nation's marine heritage, scientific research, monitoring, exploration, educational programs, and outreach are just a few of the ways ONMS fulfilled its mission to the American people over the past year.

NOAA AND PARTNERS DOCUMENT SUNKEN U-BOATS OFF NORTH CAROLINA

In July, ONMS led a scientific research expedition to the site of the remains of three sunken German submarines off the coast of North Carolina as part of a larger World War II Battle of the Atlantic archaeological study. The vessels were discovered many years ago, but have been severely impacted by looters and souvenir hunters. As part of an effort to properly document and protect the wrecks, NOAA conducted a non-invasive archaeological survey that included photo documentation of the vessels' visible sections and the biological communities found at the sites. The expedition was conducted consistent with U.S. and international policy; the submarines were not disturbed or recovered and were treated with the same respect afforded a U.S. sunken craft.



DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLANS RELEASED

In commemoration of Earth Day on April 22, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr. (U.S. Navy, ret.), NOAA Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, and other officials participated in a ceremony in Honolulu, Hawaii, to announce the release of the Draft Management Plan for the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The monument was also announced as one of two sites that the United States has nominated for consideration as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage site.

The Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Draft Management Plan was also released in May. Based on several years of scientific study and extensive public input, the plan recommends specific actions to address issues impacting the sanctuary at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay and serves as a non-regulatory policy framework for addressing the issues facing the sanctuary over the next five years. The plan lays the foundation for restoring and protecting the sanctuary's ecosystem, details the human pressures that threaten the qualities and resources of the sanctuary, and recommends actions that should be taken both now and in the future to better manage the area and its resources.

MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT DESIGNATED AS A PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE SEA AREA

In May, the International Maritime Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations, designated the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA). The monument, which encompasses a 1,200-mile stretch of coral islands, seamounts, banks, and shoals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, provides habitat for more than 7,000 marine species and contains 4,500 square miles of pristine coral reefs. It is the twelfth PSSA in the world, and the second in U.S. waters (the other is the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary). The PSSA designation deems an area deserving of special protection because of its significance for recognized ecological, socioeconomic, or scientific reasons and its potential vulnerability to damage from international maritime activities. PSSAs are recognized internationally and include a mandatory ship reporting system for vessels that transit through them.

NEW ONLINE MEDIA LIBRARY LAUNCHED

ONMS launched a new online multimedia library offering thousands of high-resolution, ocean-related photos and videos taken by NOAA scientists, educators, divers, and archaeologists and featuring all 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. The database is fully searchable by keyword, category, and location. Users can access the new media library by visiting <http://marinelife.noaa.gov>.

TELEPRESENCE CONNECTS STUDENTS TO THE MONTEREY BAY NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

In March, famed ocean explorer Robert Ballard, PhD, led a team of scientists from NOAA and other institutions on an expedition in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. ONMS, in partnership with Dr. Ballard's interactive educational program Immersion Presents, used telepresence technology – a combination of satellite and Internet connections – to transport young people “live” to the research cruise. The students visited the deep sea via the NOAA Research Vessel Fulmar and autonomous underwater vehicles; viewed majestic kelp forests reaching 100 feet tall; and observed endangered and threatened marine mammals such as the gray whale, blue whale, and California sea otter. Daily live broadcasts brought the ocean into the classrooms and living rooms of thousands of people nationwide. The mission included a 20-minute segment in Spanish to explain the importance of the sanctuary and its resources to the largest-growing demographic population in California.



Sanctuaries.noaa.gov

