

# National Marine Protected Areas Center West Coast Pilot: Marine Cultural Resources Project



## About the West Coast Pilot

Because the west coast—California, Oregon, and Washington—is currently at the forefront of federal, state, and tribal MPA activity, the National Marine Protected Areas Center is leading a collaborative initiative there to pilot key methods and approaches for developing regional systems of MPAs. This project involves developing, testing, and applying analytical tools, and gathering the best information, including science-based data and traditional ecological knowledge, to better understand how to more effectively use MPAs to sustain healthy marine environments. The products and lessons offered by this pilot will serve as a foundation for other regional MPA planning, as part of a larger effort to develop a U.S. national system of MPAs. The data collected will also be useful for numerous other ecosystem approaches to management that require the same comprehensive information.

## Pilot Partners

The West Coast Pilot is an unprecedented effort that requires core partnerships among the region's federal, state, and tribal government agencies. Key NOAA partners include the National Marine Sanctuary Program, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. In addition, the participation of the following regional partners is instrumental to the effort's success: the Department of the Interior's National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the National Estuarine Research Reserves System; the Pacific Fishery Management Council; academic institutions, and other non-governmental organizations.

## Background: The Marine Cultural Resources Project

Cultural resources within the marine environment provide a tangible connection to the nation's maritime heritage. The oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes preserve tens of thousands of significant archaeological sites, including shipwrecks, prehistoric sites, and traditional cultural places. Marine protected areas (MPAs) are currently being used to conserve and protect these significant resources for present and future generations. To evaluate how existing marine protected areas are currently protecting cultural resources and to provide for future planning efforts, information about these resources must be collected and analyzed within the context of ongoing ecosystem-based management initiatives.

## Project Description

The cultural resource information gathered will be carefully defined and meet the needs of cultural resource managers, MPA managers, and the MPA Center. The primary benefit of this initiative will be a standardized inventory of marine cultural resources used for integrated planning of west coast marine resource management efforts. This information will be valuable for facilitating coordination and information sharing across agency and jurisdictional boundaries with minimal replication of current existing data management efforts. The MPA Center will work with federal, state, and tribal government partners, and other stakeholder groups to determine the significance of known sites and to assist with documenting their historical and cultural connectivity within regional ecosystems.

## Project Objectives

- Identify and collect secondary data on cultural resources of the marine environment on the west coast.
- Develop a GIS-compatible database for the storage, analysis, and representation of secondary data.
- Assess the historical and cultural connectivity of sites within a regional context.

## Products

- Multi-layered atlas of cultural resources (with appropriate buffer zone for security) on the west coast.
- Tools for assessing the historical and cultural connectivity of marine cultural resources in the west coast region.
- Tools for identifying marine cultural resources on the west coast that are sensitive to changes induced through natural or human actions.

## For More Information

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