



# Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee

November 15, 2010

Dr. Jane Lubchenco  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, and  
NOAA Administrator  
Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Rm 5810  
Washington, DC 20230

Eileen Sobeck  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW, MIB-3156  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Under Secretary Lubchenco and Deputy Assistant Secretary Sobeck:

The Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (MPA FAC) wishes to commend the Obama Administration for issuing Executive Order 13547 establishing the *National Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, our Coasts, and Great Lakes*. Based on the *Final Recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force*, the policy has the potential to be an important and enduring step in preserving our ocean legacy for future generations. The MPA FAC urges the U.S. Departments of Interior (DOI) and Commerce (DOC), in their roles on the National Oceans Council, to proceed in future Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) initiatives with the greatest respect for the current National System of MPAs in advancing the goals of the CMSP initiatives.

The purpose of this letter is to expand upon our initial comments from May 13, 2010, and to offer our assistance as you develop your Strategic Action Plan and associated guidance for Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning in order to implement the National Ocean Policy. Our most important point is that comprehensive networks of marine protected areas are a critical element of Coastal and Marine Spatial plans and can contribute to the conservation and cultural goals articulated in the *Framework for Effective Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning*. To this end, we recommend that the upcoming regional CMS planning efforts build upon the existing National System sites and also identify and fill gaps in the system.

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## DESIGNATED FEDERAL OFFICIAL

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## **Charge to MPA FAC on CMSP**

DOC and DOI recently charged the MPA FAC to provide recommendations on:

- (1) The role and processes of the National System of MPAs within the broader CMSP initiative;
- (2) What steps are needed to ensure that conservation is sufficiently addressed within regional coastal and marine spatial plans; and
- (3) How the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and DOI can build on the spatial data, decision support tools and conservation planning processes used to develop the National System of MPAs to inform CMSP.

We are in the process of fulfilling our charge and intend to provide you with more detailed recommendations in the near future.

## **The Role of the National System of MPAs within the CMSP Initiative**

A comprehensive network of MPAs is integral to meeting the goals and principles set forth by the Ocean Policy Task Force in its Final Recommendations and Framework for Effective Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning. We recommend that the National Ocean Council use the National System of MPAs as a starting point for a more comprehensive effort to conserve ecological and cultural resources and provide for sustainable ocean use because that system offers valuable lessons and tools applicable to the CMSP process.

## **Steps Needed to Ensure Spatial Plans Sufficiently Address Conservation**

To help guide the transition from an array to a more comprehensive network of MPAs, the MPA FAC recommends moving forward with an analysis of ecological and cultural gaps in the current National System of MPAs: a growing but not yet fully comprehensive portfolio of MPAs established for a variety of objectives. To that end, the MPA FAC has developed recommendations on guiding principles ([http://www.mpa.gov/pdf/fac/facfac\\_recommend300409.pdf](http://www.mpa.gov/pdf/fac/facfac_recommend300409.pdf)) for analyzing ecological, representation and management gaps in the National System of MPAs. All of these gaps are relevant for spatial planning. As you develop your Strategic Action Plan, we hope you will consider those recommendations and other relevant products in the toolkit the MPA FAC has created, (see Appendix A).

## **Spatial Data, Decision Support Tools, and Conservation Planning Processes**

The CMSP effort would benefit by building upon spatial data, decision support tools, and conservation planning processes used to develop the National System of MPAs. These efforts, which successfully integrated numerous GIS-based tools from various states and regions around the United States, have helped MPA designers and managers



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to develop the system. CMSP efforts will also benefit from the available data on habitat features and ocean uses, sound scientific criteria or guidelines, effective integration of local knowledge, ecological events and processes, and the advice and analysis of both natural and social scientists.

## **Conclusion**

We recognize that the recommendations for the National Ocean Policy call for an ambitious and challenging schedule with the expectation that a great many things will be achieved in a relatively short amount of time. The National System of MPAs, the staff of the National MPA Center, and the MPA FAC are already working to help achieve the goals of the National Ocean Policy, and stand ready to engage directly in your efforts to implement the CMSP priority objective. The MPA FAC and National MPA Center staff represent an experienced, nationally representative, and tested resource; we encourage you to make good use of our skills and advice.

The National MPA system of MPAs and the MPA FAC represent more than two hundred and fifty designated special places, a variety of public, science, and industry sectors, and thousands of collective hours of planning and deliberation at local, state, and national levels. CMSP also represents an immediate opportunity to energize and advance the National System of MPAs. We recommend that CMSP and the National System of MPAs - two overlapping, place-based planning processes - proceed in closest possible collaboration to maximize our efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Piñeiro-Soler".

Eugenio Piñeiro-Soler  
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Arguelles".

Lori Arguelles  
Vice-Chair



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## **Appendix A: Toolkit of MPA Products**

- [Letter to NOAA and DOI on Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning](#) (May 2010)
- [Committee Recommendations on Climate Change in the Oceans, and the Cultural Heritage Vision for the National System of Marine Protected Areas](#) (April 2010)
- [Committee Recommendations on Evaluating the National System of Marine Protected Areas](#) (September 2009)
- [Committee Recommendations on Ecological Resilience and Gap Analysis of the National System of Marine Protected Areas](#) (April 2009)
- [Committee Recommendations on Linking Ocean Observing Systems with the National System and Evaluating the National System of MPAs](#) (December 2008)
- [Committee Recommendations on MPA Compliance and Enforcement and Comments on Revised Draft Framework](#) (May 2008)
- ["Toward a National System of Marine Protected Areas: A Report by the MPA Federal Advisory Committee, Recommendations from 2006-2007"](#) (February 2008)
- [Incentives for Participation in the National System of MPAs](#) (November 2007)
- [Regional Approaches to Planning and Coordination of MPAs](#) (November 2007)
- [Management Criteria, Priority Objectives, and Categories for the National System of MPAs](#) (April 2007)
- [Committee comments on the Draft MPA Framework](#) (Feb 2007)
- ["Marine Protected Areas: A Fundamental Tool for Ecosystem-Based Management"](#) (Nov 2006)
- ["Protecting America's Marine Environment: A Report of the MPA FAC on Establishing and Managing A National System of MPAs"](#) (June 2005)