

# DEVELOPING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS: HIGHLIGHTS

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

The U.S. is implementing a comprehensive, science-based and effective national system of marine protected areas (MPAs). The national system will include eligible existing MPAs across all levels of government to protect important habitats and resources. For more information, see the Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America at [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov).

## WHY DOES THE NATION NEED A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAS?

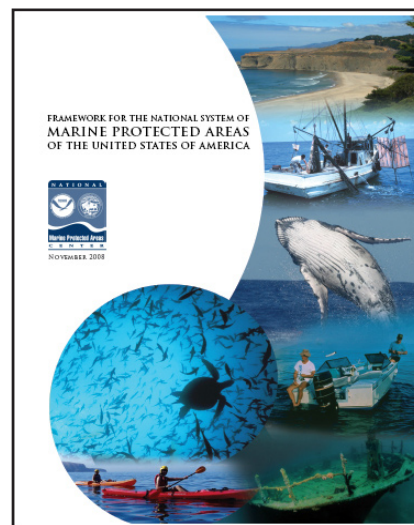
For decades, government agencies in the United States have been establishing marine protected areas (MPAs) to conserve critical natural and cultural marine resources. In fact, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA, and many states have their own systems of MPAs. While there is some coordination among sites, there is no overarching mechanism to help coordinate effective ecosystem management across these agencies and programs. In particular, we do not yet fully understand:

- what marine resources the nation protects;
- how well these resources are protected; and
- what, if any, further management may be required to make them more effective.

The National Marine Protected Areas Center is working to analyze and enhance the nation's MPAs. In cooperation with government and non-government partners across the country, the MPA Center is developing a national MPA system that will include existing MPA sites and networks that contribute to national conservation goals, as well as identifying gaps where additional protection may be needed. The MPA Center has reached out to stakeholders with a broad range of perspectives on MPAs and has successfully built consensus on the values and uses of a national system.

## FRAMEWORK FOR THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAS

Our nation's guide for collaboratively building an efficient and effective national system of marine protected areas will be published in Fall 2008. It:



- defines an effective national system built in partnership with federal, state/territorial, and tribal partners and in consultation with non-government stakeholders;
- describes goals and objectives based on scientific information, agency cooperation, and stakeholder input;
- outlines processes to develop the initial national system, based on existing sites;
- explains how to enhance MPA stewardship and coordination, identify national system gaps, and identify future conservation priorities; and
- explains a process for monitoring and evaluating the national system.

continued on back

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.



## BENEFITS OF AN EFFECTIVE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAs:

- Enhances protection of our marine resources
- Builds partnerships to address issues beyond the scope of individual MPAs or programs
- Contributes to economic health by helping sustain fisheries and enhancing potential opportunities for tourism and recreation
- Improves public access to scientific information and decision-making about the nation's marine resources

## KEY STEPS IN 2008-2009

- Publish the final national system Framework
- Initiate the nomination process for eligible sites to join the national system
- Work with partners to launch the system with an initial group of sites
- Continue developing innovative tools and information for regional analysis and coordination



For more information on the National System of Marine Protected Areas, visit [www.mpa.gov](http://www.mpa.gov)

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