



# Marine Protected Areas

## Status of NOAA Activities Under Executive Order #13158

October 2001

On June 4, 2001, the Bush Administration endorsed Executive Order #13158 on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and reiterated the President's request for \$3 million to support this effort as part of the FY2002 Department of Commerce (DOC) budget. The Executive Order directs DOC, the Department of the Interior (DOI), and other Federal agencies to strengthen and expand a national system of MPAs by working closely with state, territorial, local, tribal, and other stakeholders.

The Executive Order does not create any new MPAs; the designation and management of MPAs remains with

existing Federal, state, or local authorities. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is responsible for implementing the Executive Order for the Department of Commerce. This status report summarizes NOAA's responsibilities and efforts to implement the Executive Order. It also explains how to stay informed and participate in this important nationwide effort.

### **Executive Order Directs Federal Agencies to:**

*Strengthen the management, protection, and conservation of existing marine protected areas and expand or establish new MPAs;*

*Develop a national system of MPAs;*

*Work collaboratively with state, local, territorial, tribal, industry, nongovernmental, and other stakeholders to develop a science-based framework for a national system of MPAs;*

*Avoid causing harm to the resources protected by MPAs in the course of federally conducted, approved, or funded actions;*

*Take steps to protect beaches and the marine environment;*

*Provide annual reports of actions taken to implement the Executive Order.*

### **What Are Marine Protected Areas?**

Executive Order 13158 defines MPAs as "any area of the marine environment that has been reserved by Federal, State, territorial, tribal, or local laws or regulations to provide lasting protection for part or all of the natural and cultural resources therein." Under this definition, MPAs could include a wide variety of sites established for different purposes in areas of coastal and ocean waters, the Great Lakes and their connecting waters, and submerged lands in areas of U.S. jurisdiction.

For example, under this definition, National Marine Sanctuaries, some National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges, some State Parks and local Marine Parks, some fishery management areas, and other areas could be considered MPAs. This definition will be used to create an inventory of all U.S. MPAs, one of the steps needed to help build a national system.

### **Why Do We Need Marine Protected Areas?**

MPAs are important management tools for protecting, restoring and enjoying coastal and marine resources in the United States and



## **What Are NOAA's Responsibilities?**

*NOAA, working closely with the Department of the Interior, is directed to develop four key components of the MPA Executive Order:*

*NOAA will establish a Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee, representing a diverse spectrum of stakeholder interests, that will give advice and recommendations to NOAA and the Department of the Interior on the framework for a national system of MPAs and on other aspects of implementing the Executive Order;*

*NOAA and the Department of the Interior will develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of all MPAs in U.S. waters to provide a data base for understanding the scope and effectiveness of a national system of MPAs.*

*NOAA will establish and manage the National Marine Protected Areas Center to work collaboratively with the Department of the Interior, other Federal, state, and territorial agencies, and other partners to help provide the information, tools, and services for a national system of MPAs;*

*NOAA will create and manage a Web site (URL: <http://www.mpa.gov>) to provide the public with easy access to information on MPAs and status reports on implementing the Executive Order;*

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internationally. MPAs have been used effectively to conserve and manage natural areas, rebuild and sustain fisheries, protect species, reduce user conflicts, provide educational and research opportunities, and provide commercial and recreational opportunities. Although many different types of MPAs currently exist in U.S. waters, the U.S. does not have an integrated system of marine protected areas representing the Nation's ocean and coastal environments. In combination with other management measures, MPAs can help to conserve our valuable marine resources and ensure the sustainable use of U.S. marine waters for future generations.

## **NOAA's Responsibilities Under Executive Order #13158**

### **MPA Advisory Committee**

*Executive Order 13158 requires that NOAA establish an Advisory Committee of non-Federal members to provide advice to the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior on implementing the Executive Order.*

#### **Q: How can the public get involved?**

A: One way to get involved is through the MPA Advisory Committee. The Committee is expected to be established and begin holding public meetings in early 2002. For more information on nominations or the Committee, see our web page at <http://www.mpa.gov>.

#### **Q: What is the Advisory Committee's role?**

A: The Committee will provide recommendations on implementing the MPA Executive Order to the Secretaries of Commerce and the Interior, in compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, and the MPA Advisory Committee charter.

#### **Q: What is the status of this Advisory Committee?**

A: Nominations were solicited in 2000 and 2001. Nominations are currently under review. After a selection process, the Committee will be established and begin its work.

### **MPA Center**

*Executive Order 13158 directs NOAA to establish an MPA Center to work with partners to enhance a national system of MPAs.*

#### **Q: Why is the MPA Center needed?**

A: There are numerous science and information needs to effectively design, build, and/or strengthen MPAs. The MPA Center will help consolidate information on existing Federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local MPAs. In addition, the Center will help prioritize and support efforts to gather new information needed. The information

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collected will be provided to stakeholders and managers to help the existing authorities design, implement, and evaluate MPAs.

**Q: Who is involved in the MPA Center?**

A: NOAA is seeking partnerships to help provide Federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local governments with the information, technologies, and strategies for effective use of MPAs. If funding is available, the MPA Center will support governmental and nongovernmental scientists and other stakeholders to conduct research, analysis, and exploration on MPAs.

**Q: How will the MPA Center operate?**

A: The MPA Center is being established as a partnership between other Federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local agencies, nongovernmental organizations, institutions, and academia. The MPA Center will be based in Washington, DC, with two institutes located outside the DC area, initially focusing on the themes of (1) MPA science and (2) training and technical assistance.

**Q: What is the status of the MPA Center?**

A: The President's FY2002 budget request includes \$3 million in new funding to support the MPA Center as part of NOAA's budget. The Center's two Institutes were launched in Fall 2000. The Institute for MPA Science was established in conjunction with the National Marine Fisheries Service Science Laboratory in Santa Cruz, California. The Institute for MPA Training and Technical Assistance was established at NOAA's Coastal Services Center in Charleston, S.C. Both Institutes are under development.

**Web Site (URL: <http://www.mpa.gov>)**

*Executive Order 13158 directs the Departments of Commerce and Interior to establish an MPA Web site to provide easy access to critical information on MPAs and implementation of the Executive Order.*

**Q: What will be included on the Web site?**

A: The Web site will contain a database of existing MPAs, a reference library of MPA scientific publications and web sites. It will also provide a forum to coordinate and share information, tools, and strategies on MPAs.

**Q: What is the status of the Web site?**

A: The official site is now on-line at <http://www.mpa.gov>. Information will be updated on an ongoing basis. Input is welcome on how to improve the site. Funding requested in NOAA's FY2002 budget will support and maintain the MPA website.



***The NOAA Commitment***

*To fulfill its responsibilities under the Executive Order, NOAA is committed to the following activities:*

*Collaborating with Federal, state, local, tribal, territorial, nongovernmental organizations, and industry to fulfill the requirements of the Executive Order;*

*Disseminating information to constituents and providing opportunities for public feedback and participation.*







### **Key Partners on MPAs:**

*Federal Agencies*

*State governments*

*Local governments*

*Territories*

*Tribes*

*Industry*

*Nongovernmental organizations*

*Academia*

*Other interested parties*



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## **MPA Inventory**

*Executive Order 13158 directs the Departments of Commerce and Interior to develop a list of all U.S. MPAs and provide this information on the MPA web site. An initial MPA Inventory is being constructed to provide information on these and other sites. The Inventory will provide a foundation for understanding the scope of existing sites and for assessing and designing a national system of MPAs.*

### **Q: How is the Inventory being designed?**

A: NOAA is designing the Inventory to provide easy access to information on U.S. MPAs. With funding requested in FY2002, information on each MPA will be collected and housed in a large database that allows users to search, query and, ultimately, map U.S. MPAs. The Inventory is being assembled in a phased approach beginning with Federal sites, followed by state, territorial, local and tribal sites, working closely with these partners.

### **Q: Which areas will be included in the official list of U.S. MPAs?**

A: The official list of U.S. MPAs will include Federal, state, territorial, local, and tribal areas that meet the definition of MPAs in the Executive Order. The working inventory is not the official list of U.S. MPAs required by the Order.

### **Q: What is the status of the Inventory?**

A: Initial information is now being collected on existing Federal MPAs to begin the database. Funding is requested in NOAA's FY2002 budget to build the Inventory. Public input is needed on the criteria for including sites in the Inventory, and what information to provide on each site (data fields). Please see the Inventory section of the MPA website at <http://www.mpa.gov> for more information.

## **How to Get Involved**

Partnerships are essential to successfully implement the Executive Order and build a national system of MPAs. Please contact us to get involved. For more information, visit the Web site (<http://www.mpa.gov>) or contact NOAA at the address below.

## **Contacts**

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