

NAT'L MARINE SANCTUARIES



America's ocean and Great Lakes treasures

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program serves as the trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes waters. Within the sanctuary system's protected waters, majestic humpback whales breed and calve their young, coral reefs flourish, and shipwrecks tell stories of our maritime history. The mission of NOAA's national marine sanctuaries is to conserve, protect and enhance the biodiversity, ecological integrity and cultural legacy of these special underwater places. The program is able to do this with one of the strongest pieces of ocean protection federal legislation, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

A Leader in Marine Conservation

Resource protection is at the core of the National Marine Sanctuary Program's mission. With the addition of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument to the sanctuary system in June 2006, the sanctuary program reached a true milestone in marine conservation. The monument, which encompasses nearly 140,000 square miles of ocean waters surrounding the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, is the largest conservation area in the world, dwarfing Yellowstone, Yosemite and Grand Canyon national parks combined. It protects a treasure trove of thriving coral reefs and some of the world's most exotic species — a quarter of which are found nowhere else on Earth.

This is just one example of the sanctuary program's commitment to leading the nation in stewardship of our precious marine resources. Throughout the system, sanctuary



Coral reef.



Many whale species, including humpbacks (above), are found in national marine sanctuaries.

personnel develop effective and innovative management strategies, including marine reserves in California's Channel Islands and the Florida Keys, habitat restoration programs, and marine debris removal efforts.

World-Class Science Informing Management

Strong science-based management is a top priority for the National Marine Sanctuary System, and the sanctuary program devotes extensive resources to ensure ocean leaders have the information necessary to make effective and timely management decisions. For example, research conducted in 2006 by scientists at Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary played a major role in the International Maritime Organization's decision to shift Boston shipping lanes, a move that studies indicate will drastically reduce the risk of ship strikes to endangered whales.

Sanctuary science programs are also helping us understand more about the sanctuaries and how different human and natural factors are causing changes within them. Five years after establishing the largest no-take reserve in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary's Dry Tortugas region, studies in 2006 revealed increasing numbers and sizes of commercially and recreationally important fish species and other marine life within the reserve. In addition, through efforts like the rigorous Sanctuary-Wide Integrated

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Monitoring program, which is collecting important information about the health and resource quality of all the marine sanctuaries, the National Marine Sanctuary Program is improving our knowledge of the underwater world.

Educating the American Public

National marine sanctuaries are living classrooms where people can see, touch and learn about our nation's underwater treasures. In partnership with the state of California, the sanctuary program created the successful "Thank You Ocean" public ocean awareness campaign, bringing together an alliance of more than 200 ocean communicators to promote ocean stewardship to millions of people.

Through innovative technologies like telepresence, sanctuary educators have also been able to reach out to students and teachers in coastal and landlocked areas alike. In September 2007, sanctuary personnel participating in an expedition to study coral reefs at the Aquarius underwater research facility were able to broadcast live educational programming via Web cast from the undersea habitat to classrooms across America.

Preserving Our Nation's History

Protecting and documenting historically significant shipwrecks and artifacts is essential to preserving the stories of America's maritime history. The sanctuary program has made stewardship of all significant archaeological, cultural and historical resources within the waters of the National Marine Sanctuary System a priority, so that history is not lost beneath the waves. The very first national marine sanctuary, designated in 1975, was created to preserve the wreck of the famous Civil War ironclad USS *Monitor*, one of the most significant vessels in all of American naval history.



U.S.S. Monitor.

The sanctuary program's dedication to maritime heritage did not stop with the designation of *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary, however, and expeditions into the sanctuaries regularly yield new information and unexpected discoveries. In 2006, sanctuary researchers participated in a mission to document the wreck of the USS *Macon* — the U.S. Navy's last dirigible — another fascinating piece of American maritime history that lies deep within Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Protecting Past, Present & Future

Whether discovering deep-water corals in the northern waters off the Olympic Coast or increasing marine life abundance through the establishment of the Florida Keys Tortugas ecological reserve, the National Marine Sanctuary Program is your leader in ocean stewardship, protecting and conserving America's great lakes and ocean treasures for generations now and generations to follow. ♻️