



# NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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## **NOAA LAUNCHES MARINE MAMMAL ECOSYSTEM SURVEY OFF WEST COAST** *Emphasis Placed on National Marine Sanctuaries*

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration today announced the beginning of a research effort to identify and count marine mammals and seabirds along the west coast of the United States while also investigating the ocean ecosystem. This scientific endeavor, known as the Collaborative Survey of Cetacean Abundance and the Pelagic Ecosystem (CSCAPE) will survey up to 300-miles along the continental shelf and deep waters off the coasts of Washington, Oregon and California.

Researchers will gather information on the number and location of marine mammals and seabirds, conduct biopsy and photo-documentation of whales and dolphins, collect zooplankton and jellyfish samples, and conduct oceanographic investigations. Scientists will pay particular attention to the waters within the National Marine Sanctuaries as part of a long-term ecosystem-monitoring program. CSCAPE is a continuation of a series of cruises by NOAA Fisheries Service to study west coast marine mammals, begun in 1991.

“Monitoring the abundance and trends of marine mammals and aspects of their ecosystem is a core activity of NOAA Fisheries Service,” said Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries director. “Information from these cruises is essential for managing marine mammal populations and the fisheries that interact with them.”

NOAA Fisheries Service and NOAA’s National Ocean Service are collaborating on CSCAPE to simultaneously accomplish a variety of scientific goals.

“We need to establish a baseline and continually monitor the health and well-being of our marine sanctuaries,” said Richard Spinrad, assistant administrator of NOAA’s National Ocean Service. “Partnering with NOAA Fisheries Service we can improve the quality of the data collected and ultimately manage our marine resources more effectively.”

While conducting the surveys, additional information will also be gathered on humpback whales as part of the Structure of Populations, Level of Abundance and Status of Humpbacks, or SPLASH, a three-year effort that began in 2004.

The NOAA research vessel *McArthur II* will complete the first leg of the research cruise when it arrives in Port Angeles, Wash. on June 13, 2005, after extensively surveying the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

CSCAPE will continue its research from July through December, concentrating first on areas of the other West coast marine sanctuaries of Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Carillons and Monterey Bay, and then surveying the entire marine region within 300 miles of the coast.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA's National Ocean Service manages the National Marine Sanctuary Program and balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>

NOAA Ocean Service: <http://www.oceanservice.noaa.gov>

NOAA CSCAPE: <http://swfsc.nmfs.noaa.gov/PRD/PROJECTS/CSCAPE/default.htm>