

A Quick Look at National Marine Sanctuaries



Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
Kayaking off Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

Building Strong Communities through Conservation

For the past 40 years, our national marine sanctuaries have worked to protect special places in America's ocean and Great Lakes waters, from the site of a single Civil War shipwreck to a vast expanse of ocean surrounding remote coral reefs and tiny atolls. Backed by one of the nation's strongest pieces of ocean conservation legislation, national marine sanctuaries seek to preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections and economic productivity of our most precious underwater treasures. By acting as responsible stewards of these special places, we strengthen our nation now and for future generations.



Photo: NOAA, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Big wave surfer off the coast of California's Half Moon Bay

The National Marine Sanctuary System: *Engaging, Empowering, and Building Strong Communities*

Who We Are

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), manages the National Marine Sanctuary System, comprised of 13 national marine sanctuaries, and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Its network of 14 marine protected areas is one of the oldest (40+ years) and largest in the world, encompassing more than 170,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington State to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The ONMS also leads the National Marine Protected Areas Center, the nation's hub for building innovative partnerships and tools to protect special ocean places.

Our Way of Doing Business

We foster partnerships: The sanctuary system can't do the job of protecting these special ocean places alone. We maintain, invest in, and benefit from hundreds of partnerships with very different organizations, including with non-governmental organizations,

the academic community, and businesses. We have research collaborations with more than 20 organizations, and sanctuary education efforts reaching more than 6.4 million people.

We engage communities: For a sanctuary to be successful, it must have the support and involvement of the communities that border and rely on it. We involve communities in their sanctuaries through a variety of methods, including advisory groups, public meetings, volunteer opportunities, and educational and outreach events.

We empower volunteers: Volunteers help to ensure sanctuaries remain vibrant for future generations. Through their efforts, volunteers contribute more than 100,000 hours of annual service to the sanctuaries in areas of research, monitoring, enforcement, education and outreach, and management advice. For more information, see http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/involved/volunteer_future.html.



Scuba divers explore Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

Photo: NOAA

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



We innovate: The ocean is always in motion, and so are we. Sanctuary staff are always on the lookout for how to harness the newest technology and tools in protecting sanctuary resources, for example in developing apps for sanctuary visitors, using unmanned aircraft in oil spill drills and marine species censuses, testing advanced diving technology for our research divers, and pushing the boundaries in the use of international tools to prevent anchoring and vessel grounding damage.

We see the bigger picture: Sanctuaries cannot be protected by only working within their boundaries; they are part of the vast, fluid marine environment. We therefore use our sites to project a conservation message and ethic far beyond our boundaries and

engage at every level (locally, regionally, nationally and internationally).

Our Advisory Councils

National marine sanctuary advisory councils are community-based advisory groups established to provide advice and recommendations to the superintendents of the fourteen sites on issues including management, science, service, and stewardship. More information on advisory councils can be found at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/ac/welcome.html>.

We empower leading citizens:

The more than 430 members (including alternates) represent a broad cross-section of the communities that lie adjacent to national

marine sanctuaries, and represent such interests as conservation, education, research, fishing, whale watching, diving and other recreational activities, boating and shipping, tourism, harbors and ports, maritime business, agriculture, and maritime heritage, as well as jurisdictional partners from local, regional, state, tribal, territorial and federal agencies.

We connect American business to conservation:

The Sanctuary System Business Advisory Council is the first and so far only group of its kind in NOAA, and perhaps in the federal government. It was created, in short, to provide advice to the sanctuary system on how to better engage the corporate sector in protecting our sites and the ocean at large (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/bac/welcome.html>).



Photo: Steve Sellers, NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary

The wheel from the schooner *Cornelia B. Windiate*.



Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Youth experience at a past CoastFest event in Port Angeles, Washington.



Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Giant trevally along a shallow reef in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.