



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
OFFICE OF OCEAN AND COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

September 29, 2009

Dear National System Partners:

As we wrap up federal fiscal year 2009, I want to share with you some of the progress the National Marine Protected Areas Center (MPA Center) has been making in supporting the implementation of the national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) partnership. This has been an exciting and productive year. After an extensive public process, NOAA and the Department of the Interior completed the *Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States* last November. On Earth Day 2009, we welcomed 225 federal, state and territorial sites into the national system of MPAs. Then, in June 2009, we met with federal, state, territorial and tribal national system partners to collaborate on setting priorities and establishing next steps for the national system.

As you know, the national system of MPAs was called for by Executive Order 13158 to provide a framework for more effective cooperation and stewardship of the United States' natural and cultural marine resources. Below is a brief summary of the MPA Center's accomplishments for Fiscal Year 2009, together with an update on some of the new initiatives in progress. We are particularly excited about new partnerships with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to establish an MPA Fund that will provide grants to national system partners; with the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to support training and capacity development; and continuing the "people and places" virtual North American MPA Network (NAMPAN) in cooperation with the Commission for Environmental Cooperation in North America and our U.S., Canadian, and Mexican counterparts.

The challenges we all face from climate change require not only strong national, but international partnerships as well if we are to succeed in maintaining vibrant, sustainable, resilient marine and Great Lakes resources. The strength of the national system is in its partnerships across agencies, levels of government, states and regions. We look forward to working with you to fulfill the promise of the national system and to support your MPA programs.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Uravitch
Director

National Marine Protected Areas Center



National System of Marine Protected Areas Key Accomplishments and Ongoing Initiatives FY2009-2010

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS (FY2009)

NOAA and DOI Publish Final Framework for National System of Marine Protected Areas:

On November 20, 2008, NOAA's MPA Center, together with the Department of the Interior (DOI), formally released the final [*Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States*](#), completing a cooperative, multi-year effort to provide a comprehensive approach to the protection of the nation's natural and cultural marine treasures. The announcement of the publication was made during a ceremony in Monterey, CA, where Commerce Deputy Assistant Secretary Tim Keeney, and others representing the Department of the Interior, the state of California, Congressman Sam Farr, and the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee (MPA FAC) spoke about the importance of working together to conserve our ocean heritage.

NOAA and DOI Announce First Members of the National System of MPAs

On April 22, NOAA and the Department of the Interior, announced the admission of 225 existing federal, state and territorial MPAs into the national system of MPAs. Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator, and Will Shafroth, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks attended the ceremony in Annapolis, MD, and provided opening remarks. Additional national system partners were represented by Melissa Miller-Henson (California) and Dr. Susan Langley (Maryland). The charter group comprises sites from state, territorial, federal and federal/state partnership agencies in 28 states, plus additional offshore areas under federal jurisdiction. This group will be the focus of cooperative efforts to address common resource management challenges, and has been placed on the official List of National System MPAs, available on www.mpa.gov.

MPA Center Holds National System Partners Retreat

On June 2-3, the MPA Center held the first National System of MPAs Partners Retreat at the Aspen Wye River Institute in Queenstown, MD. Representatives from federal, state, and tribal MPA programs met to share information about their capabilities and needs. Specific objectives were to: 1) identify priorities for near term focus of the national system; 2) identify specific priorities for action to strengthen the national system; 3) identify key opportunities for collaboration with other coastal and ocean initiatives, and; 4) identify interim measures for national system coordination and communication. Products from this retreat will help guide the MPA Center in identifying thematic and regional priorities for the next 1-3 years.

MPA Federal Advisory Committee Completes National System Recommendations

The MPA Federal Advisory Committee is comprised of 30 representatives of diverse stakeholder groups who advise NOAA and DOI on the implementation of the national system of MPAs. The Committee met three times during FY2009, and developed recommendation on:

- the benefits of linking ocean observing systems with the national system of MPAs;

- how MPA networks and the national system of MPAs can support ecological resilience in the face of climate change and other human impacts;
- guiding principles for an ecological gap analysis of the national system of MPAs; and
- a planning tool for evaluating the national system of MPAs.

All Committee recommendations are posted at <http://mpa.gov/mpafac/fac.html>

MPA Center Holds Conservation Gap Analysis Scoping Workshop

In February 2009, the MPA Center held a workshop to scope out the regional gap analysis process that will identify important ecological areas that meet the conservation objectives of the national system of MPAs. The gap analysis process will help strengthen the national system of MPAs by identifying areas that may be in need of additional place-based protection. The workshop drew on the expertise of approximately 20 national and international scientists and resource managers with experience in marine and terrestrial gap analysis. Major topics of discussion included ensuring a representative national system, integrating diverse geospatial information on marine resources and uses, involving stakeholders at appropriate points in the process, and fostering partnerships.

Cartoonists Lend Their Pens to the National System of MPAs Syndicated cartoonists Jack Elrod (*Mark Trail*) and Jim Toomey (*Sherman's Lagoon*) both highlighted the national system of MPAs in their work this year. On Sunday, April 12, *Mark Trail* featured a colorful panel highlighting the National System of MPAs. Illustrated by vivid drawings of sea life, the narrative in the strip explains the importance of the national system and clarifies that the majority of MPAs in the U.S. are multiple use. *Mark Trail* appears in 175 newspapers, reaching nearly 23 million readers worldwide. Jim Toomey created and donated a *Sherman's Lagoon* poster highlighting the three conservation goals of the National System of MPAs, Natural Heritage Conservation, Cultural Heritage Conservation, and Sustainable Production for the national system's celebration ceremony held on Earth Day 2009 in Annapolis, MD. The poster features Sherman, the great white shark, and his fellow fanciful inhabitants of Kapupu Lagoon in the Palauan archipelago of Micronesia. It is being used for national system outreach and education activities. Copies are available to national system partners.

ONGOING NATIONAL SYSTEM INITIATIVES (FY2010)

Partnership with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to Create MPA Fund

The MPA Center and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) have established an MPA Fund to support the national system of MPAs. The fund will issue its first call for proposals in Fall 2009, requesting short pre-proposals to support regional MPA coordination and stewardship initiatives. Approximately \$190K is available for grants. NFWF and the MPA Center are seeking additional partners to expand the fund in 2010 and beyond. Updates on the fund will be posted soon on www.mpa.gov and www.nfwf.org.

Partnership with Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to Support MPA Training

The MPA Center is working with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to bring the expertise of the Sanctuaries Program to national system partners. Training opportunities will be identified during FY2010, based on feedback from the National System Partners Retreat. Initial topics being considered for training include designing and managing MPA networks, communication skills for MPA professionals, and planning for climate change impacts on the ocean.

Partnership with the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) in North America, Canada and Mexico for the North American MPA Network (NAMPAN)

The MPA Center is working with U.S. MPA programs, Parks Canada and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Mexico's Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP) to establish a common condition report on environmental conditions that can be used by MPAs across the three countries. The project has established pilot sites in the Pacific "Baja to Bering" region, and a report on the project will be completed in FY2010. A "train the trainers" workshop was held in Port Angeles, WA, in September to increase the ability to apply the process elsewhere in North America. NAMPAN will be one of the topics of discussion at the 2010 U.S. National System Partners meeting.

Second Nomination Process for National System of MPAs

The second round of nominations for eligible federal, state and territorial sites to be included in the National System of MPAs will run from August 6-November 6, 2009. All federal, state and territorial MPA programs with eligible sites have been invited to nominate. All nominated sites will be available for public comment. For more information, and to see if your site is eligible for membership in the national system, visit http://mpa.gov/national_system/nominating_mpas.html

Developing the Regional Conservation Ecological Gap Analysis

The MPA Center is working toward an effective, representative national system by supporting the stewardship efforts of existing MPAs, and through a regional ecological gap analysis process. The gap analysis will identify areas that contribute to the Natural Heritage and Sustainable Production goals' priority conservation objectives of the national system and would benefit from additional protection. The MPA Center and its partners will collect and analyze information on ocean resources and uses, describe how current MPAs contribute to national system objectives, and engage the public. The purpose of the gap analysis is to inform the conservation efforts of managing agencies across all levels of government. This process is being designed and will be applied in California as a demonstration in FY2009-10.

Mapping Human Uses of the Ocean

The MPA Center has embarked on an ambitious initiative to fill a critical knowledge gap in marine spatial management in US waters: patterns of human use. Begun in California with the support of foundation funding, the Ocean Uses Atlas project maps 30 major human activities across three sectors (i.e. industrial and military, fishing and non-consumptive). These maps will contribute to the gap analysis for the national system of MPAs, as well as helping to guide other approaches to marine spatial planning. FY10 will expand the Atlas project to New Hampshire, Southern Maine (UNH Coastal Conservation Research Center partnership) and the waters of American Samoa (Coral Conservation Program partnership), with the goal of completing the entire US EEZ in three years.

Strengthening Cultural Resource Component of the National System

In August 2009, Valerie Grussing joined the MPA Center as the Cultural Resources Coordinator. This position had been vacant for two years due to budget constraints. The MPA Federal Advisory Committee voted in September 2009 to establish a Cultural Heritage Resources Working Group to develop recommendations for a vision for the cultural resources component of the national system, enhance the participation of cultural resource sites in the national system, and provide guidance on conducting a gap analysis for cultural resources to identify priorities for future protection.

Outreach to Fishery Management Councils

The MPA Center is working closely with NOAA Fisheries to inform the Regional Fishery Management Councils about the nomination process for the national system and encourage them to nominate eligible sites. MPA Center or NOAA Fisheries staff have presented to seven of the eight Councils, and several Councils are moving forward to recommend fishery management MPAs for nomination to the national system. All sites recommended by the Councils will go through public comment periods at both the Council and the national level.

National System Outreach

The MPA Center has been reaching out to potential national system partners through presentations, newsletters, the national system website, www.mpa.gov, and other mechanisms. In FY2009, the MPA Center presented information on the national system to the Coastal State Organization, National Estuarine Research Reserve Managers, George Wright Society, National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Councils, and an international audience at the second International Marine Protected Areas Conference in May 2009. Outreach efforts will be ongoing, with plans to develop new multi-media materials

Upgrading of the MPA.gov Web Site and Establishing Web-Based Communication

The MPA Center and the Coral Conservation Program have jointly hired a web master, Damon Denson, to improve the content and utility of each web site. At the request of system partners, a national system partners' internal web page was created to facilitate information sharing on meetings, workshops and other events and projects related to national system development. Improvements to all of these capabilities will continue in FY2010.