

# The National System of MPAs: Nomination Process



## National Marine Protected Areas Center

*The nation's hub for building innovative partnerships and tools to protect special ocean places.*

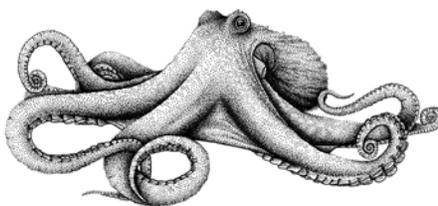
### **What is the national system of marine protected areas?**

Special places in the ocean -- marine protected areas -- are critical to America's future, sustaining our natural systems, the local economies they support, and our cultural connections to the sea. The U.S. is building a national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) to connect and strengthen the nation's diverse marine protected areas. The national system will include eligible existing MPAs across all levels of government that have chosen to work together on shared conservation priorities.

### **Nomination Process for Existing Sites to Join the National System**

The nomination process for the National System of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) is transparent, science-based, and provides an opportunity for public comment. The National Marine Protected Areas Center is responsible for the technical review of nominations.

All sites must meet three entry criteria to be eligible for the national system: (1) Meets the definition of an MPA as defined in the Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America. (2) Has a management plan (can be site-specific or part of a broader programmatic management plan; plan must include site goals/objectives and monitoring and evaluation of those goals/objectives). (3) Contributes to at least one priority conservation objective as listed in the Framework. In addition, cultural heritage MPAs must



meet additional cultural heritage requirements.

The MPA Center will use existing information to determine which sites meet the first two criteria. These identified sites are potentially eligible MPAs. The managing entities of potentially eligible MPAs will be sent a nomination package and invited to nominate any eligible sites. To do so, they will be asked to document how each nominated MPA meets criterion number three above (and cultural heritage requirements, if relevant)

### **Ensuring Public Participation?**

The public will have an opportunity to comment on nominations and will be notified through a *Federal Register* notice, the MPA Center website and other outreach. The MPA Center will evaluate and forward public comment to the relevant managing entity, which will then make the final decision regarding proceeding with the nomination. After final MPA Center review, mutually agreed upon MPAs will be accepted into the national system. Currently, the national system includes 437 sites representing three federal programs, multiple programs within 12 states and territories, and one partnership program. MPAs newly accepted into the national system will be added to the official List of National System MPAs, posted on [www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov](http://www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov) and announced in the *Federal Register*.

### **Draft Timeline for Nomination Process**

*June 2015:*

MPA Center sends out nomination invitation to federal, state and territorial MPA managing entities with potentially eligible existing sites.

*August 21, 2015*

Nomination forms due

*September 2015:*

MPA Center makes list of nominated national system MPAs available for public review; notice in *Federal Register* and on [www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov](http://www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov).

*October 2015:*

MPA Center and managing entities review public comments received. Managing entities make final determination about which sites to nominate. MPA Center reviews final nominations to ensure criteria are met.

*November 2015:*

MPA Center notifies managing entities of accepted sites and announce of sites to join the National System of MPAs. List of National System sites posted on [www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov](http://www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov).

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