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mpa connections

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Table of Contents

Federal Advisory Committee Delivers Recommendations to Commerce and Interior 1

MPA Center to Host Public Dialogue on Developing a National System for Gulf of Mexico Region 2

MPA Federal Advisory Committee Profile: Dr. Mark Hixon 3

New Book and Map Identifies 28 Marine Priority Conservation Areas 3

Events and Conferences 3-4

Notable Additions to the MPA Virtual Library 4

The *mission of the National Marine Protected Areas Center* is to facilitate the effective use of science, technology, training, and information in the planning, management, and evaluation of the nation's system of marine protected areas. *MPA Connections* was launched to meet continuing calls by agency and external stakeholders for information about MPA Center activities and to feature other actions that address Executive Order 13158 goals.

Federal Advisory Committee Delivers Marine Protected Area Recommendations to Commerce and Interior Departments

The Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee delivered its first set of recommendations for the creation of a national system of marine protected areas to the Department of Commerce and the Department of the Interior today.

The report, which is consistent with the Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan, recommends processes to establish a national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) built upon existing sites and new areas that meet specific criteria. The committee states that the system's goal should be "to enhance effective stewardship, lasting protection, and sustainable use of the nation's natural and cultural marine resources with due consideration of the interests of and implications for all who use and care about our marine environment."

"This report offers recommendations that are in line with NOAA's mission to manage coastal and ocean resources," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "The goal is to develop MPAs as an important tool in the effort to produce benefits for the environment and the economy."

As called for in the committee's charter, the report will go through Admiral Lautenbacher to the Secretary of Commerce and through Rebecca W. Watson, assistant secretary of the interior for land and minerals management, to the Secretary of the Interior. The committee unanimously approved the report at its meeting last month in Portland, Maine.

continued on page 2

MPA Connections was first published by the National Marine Protected Areas Center in October 2002. The newsletter is available electronically and distributed via listserv. Issues are archived on http://mpa.gov/information_tools/newsletters.html. To subscribe, send an email to the editor, Dana.Topousis@noaa.gov.

Continued from page 1: Committee Delivers Recommendations to Commerce and Interior

The committee recommendations include:

- Primary responsibility for the creation and management of MPAs must lie with existing legal, statutory, and legislative authorities to the extent feasible.
- The public, user groups, tribes and state and local governments must be integral parts of the nomination, planning, implementation, evaluation and adaptive management process.
- There must be awareness of and respect for the sovereignty of states, territories, tribes and local jurisdictions. International commitments must also be respected.
- Incentives for participation and cooperation by government agencies and by existing and future stakeholders must be provided. Incentives might include training, technical assistance, or funding to offset the costs of participating in the national system.

“I am enormously pleased that the MPA Federal Advisory Committee has managed to work together in a spirit of goodwill to produce this document,” said Daniel Bromley, Ph. D., chairman of the committee and a professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “We expect that our work will contribute to the enhanced management and protection of our nation’s marine ecosystems.”

“I’m glad to see that the advisory committee emphasizes the need to involve the public, user groups, tribes, state and local governments in establishing and managing marine protected areas,” said Assistant Secretary Watson. “I know that a lot of wisdom resides outside the Washington Beltway. It’s right to invite these citizen stewards — folks who live near the oceans and Great Lakes, earn their living with these resources, or recreate in coastal areas — to work with us to protect and conserve our marine resources for future generations.”

These recommendations come at the end of the inaugural advisory committee’s two-year term, and are based on deliberations since the committee first met in June 2003.

Over the course of two years, the federal advisory panel has invited diverse MPA stakeholder groups to address the committee on issues of concern. These groups included representatives from fishery management councils, tribal and cultural panelists, recreational fishermen, scientists, as well as federal and state MPA program officials. Committee meetings were held in various regions to ensure broad public comments.

Authorized in 2000 by Presidential Executive Order 13158 to provide advice and recommendations to the Departments of Commerce and the Interior, the 30-member advisory committee represents scientists, academia, commercial and recreational fishermen, tourism, the oil and gas industry, state and tribal resource managers, environmentalists, and other resource users. Committee members are appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, in consultation with the Department of the Interior, and serve two-year terms. A new committee will be appointed later this summer and will meet in November.

The Committee’s report is available on www.MPA.gov. Transcripts, presentations, and other documents from past meetings also are posted on the Web site.

NOAA, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through research to better understand weather and climate-related events and to manage wisely the nation’s coastal and marine resources.

The Department of the Interior is the nation’s principal conservation agency. Interior serves as the steward for approximately 426 million acres of America’s public land, representing about 19 percent of the U.S. land surface and 66 percent of all federally owned land. Interior also manages mineral development on the 1.48 billion acre U.S. outer continental shelf.

On the Web:

Department of Commerce: <http://www.doc.gov>

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

Department of the Interior: <http://www.doi.gov>

Marine Protected Areas Center: <http://www.MPA.gov>

MPA Center to Host Public Dialogue for Gulf of Mexico Region on July 18

As part of its efforts to gather input from stakeholders across the nation about developing the national system of marine protected areas, the MPA Center will host a regional public dialogue for the Gulf of Mexico region on July 18, 2005, in New Orleans. The MPA Center has already held public meetings in Washington, D.C. and Portland, Maine, and has met with federal and state agencies nationwide to answer questions, discuss relevant issues, and collect feedback on the vision for the national system. The meeting agenda, background materials, and participant responses from past meetings are posted on http://mpa.gov/national_system/.

The Gulf of Mexico public dialogue will take place on July 18, 2005, from 6:30-9:00 p.m. at the Canal Street Marriott in New Orleans, Louisiana. Meeting room capacity is limited, so interested participants are required to RSVP to mpa.comments@noaa.gov no later than July 8, 2005. Written comments may also be submitted to mpa.comments@noaa.gov.

Profile: Dr. Mark Hixon, Subcommittee Chair, MPA Federal Advisory Committee

His name is not Nemo. He has never skippered a submarine named the Nautilus, nor has he ever plumbed the seas at 20,000 leagues. But while diving in the Delta submersible along the continental shelf off the California coast, Dr. Mark Hixon found himself in one of Jules Verne's most famous storylines. At 1200 feet (0.07 leagues) below the ocean's surface, Mark encountered a rare octopus with arms stretching 10 feet from its body. As the marine ecologist and his colleagues stopped to inspect the creature, they realized that their point of interest was just as curious about examining the equally unfamiliar beast before it.

Known for their shyness and intelligence, octopuses rarely stick around for scientists to study them. But as this individual slowly extended one reddish-brown arm towards the cold, metal submersible, its curiosity prevailed over any usual bashfulness. While the octopus took its time inspecting the ship, the scientists watched its tentacles move across their portholes. At times, the scientists looked straight into the saucer-sized eye of their examiner as it peered inside the mysterious orb. Eventually the octopus finished its investigation and jettisoned off with one great pulse of its arms.

With "occupational hazards" like these, it is no wonder why Mark dedicates his time to conserving the oceans in the hopes that his children and grandchildren might also discover the many wonders it offers.

When first diving into marine science, Mark stayed closer to shore, studying fish that live in rocky and coral reefs. These reefs, along with providing ample living space and protection for fish, also host a vast ecological web that includes everything from primary producers to apex predators. And with all of these organisms mating, feeding, and competing with each other, Mark found a perfect setting to assess the mechanisms that affect growth or decline in fish populations and the resulting changes in biodiversity.

With national interest in the use of marine protected areas (MPAs) growing, Mark began incorporating protected reefs into his research – specifically, marine reserves. By studying reserves, Mark could assess whether the fish that live in these areas replenish the populations of fish stocks in adjacent, unprotected waters. Eventually, Mark's reputation for thorough, rigorous science drew community members and organizations to seek his counsel on their various processes to develop MPAs. But in the world of science, where personal biases must be minimized, providing guidance on environmental management can quickly raise questions about a scientist's intentions, especially when advising on controversial issues like MPAs.

Mark inevitably encountered individuals who did not agree with his assessments, but says that his consultations have not led the scientific community to question his research. "I am fortunate enough to have built my reputation as a scientist before I started advising on MPAs. But I also make it clear when I'm speaking as a scientist or when I'm speaking as a citizen."

His experiences serving with the Pacific Marine Conservation Council, Sustainable Ecosystems Institute, and Seafood Watch Program prompted a number of groups to nominate him for the MPA Federal Advisory Committee. Wanting to ensure that sound ecological principles were incorporated into the process and thinking that he could help facilitate this exchange, Mark accepted the nomination. Soon after meeting his fellow committee members, Mark received a second nomination to serve as chair for the subcommittee that focused on the national system of MPAs. With nine other members representing interests in states, fishing, oil, environment, and science, Mark considered it especially important to maintain a neutral position while convening with the subcommittee.

continued on page 4

New Book and Map Identifies 28 Marine Priority Conservation Areas

On the eve of World Ocean Day (June 8), the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of North America and Marine Conservation Biology Institute (MCBI) released *Marine Priority Conservation Areas: Baja California to the Bering Sea*, a report highlighting 28 of the most important places to protect along the North American Pacific coastline.

These priority conservation areas constitute 8 percent of the exclusive economic zones for Baja California to Bering Sea waters. Between 2001 and 2003, MCBI and the CEC gathered marine scientists in a series of scientific workshops to deliberate on which areas are essential for safeguarding the biological diversity of North America's western coast. *Marine Priority Conservation Areas: Baja California to the Bering Sea* synthesizes the recommendations of nearly 200 scientists from non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the governments of the three nations North America, including National Marine Protected Areas Center scientists.

The CEC is an international organization created by Canada, Mexico, and the United States under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. It was established to address regional environmental concerns, help prevent potential trade and environmental conflicts, and promote the effective enforcement of environmental law. The Agreement complements the environmental provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The map and 132-page book of the marine priority conservation areas are available upon request from the National Marine Protected Areas Center while supplies last; write to Daphne.Pee@noaa.gov to obtain a copy. An online version of the book and map can be downloaded at www.mcbi.org or www.cec.org.

To learn more about the MPA Center's involvement with CEC, go to http://mpa.gov/mpa_programs/international.html.

Events and Conferences

July

11-16: National Marine Educators Association annual conference, "Look to the Source, Look to the Sea," Maui, Hawaii; <http://www.hawaii.edu/mcc/oceania/NMEA05.html>.

18: Envisioning a National System of Marine Protected Areas: Gulf of Mexico Public Dialogue, New Orleans; http://mpa.gov/national_system/.

18-21: Coastal Zone '05, New Orleans, Louisiana. The MPA Center will host an exhibit booth. <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cz/>.

25-29: International Tuna Fishers Conference on Responsible Fisheries and the Third International Fishers' Forum (IFF3), Yokohama, Japan; <http://www.fishersforum.org/>.

continued on back page

Continued from Page 3: Profile, Dr. Hixon

“We all sought common ground. So as a subcommittee chair, I wanted to ensure that all sides were heard.”

This month, the Federal Advisory Committee delivered its unanimously-approved report on establishing and managing a national system of MPAs to the Departments of Commerce and the Interior. Having reached consensus amongst such a broad cross-section of stakeholders, Mark hopes that the government will fully implement the committee’s recommendations. He expects to spend his second term on the committee translating policy discussions from the first term into specific details of application, such as the scientific approaches needed to design and implement a national MPA network.

“I believe that sound science was incorporated into the committee’s recommendations,” Mark said. “But I am most impressed by all the people who serve on this committee. Each member has displayed an incredible capacity to find consensus – listening to what each other has to say while still voicing their own opinion.”

If you would like to nominate a volunteer to be profiled by the MPA Center, please contact Daphne.Pee@noaa.gov.

Continued: Events and Conferences

August

9-11: Pacific Coast Social Science Workshop, hosted by MPA Center, Monterey, California (Fischer, Oles)

21-24: Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, 58th Annual Meeting, Girdwood, Alaska; http://www.psmfc.org/meetings/2005_annual_mtg.html.

29-31: White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation, St. Louis, Missouri; <http://www.conservation.ceq.gov>.

September

11-15: American Fisheries Society, 135th annual meeting, “Creating a Fisheries Mosaic: Connections across Jurisdictions, Disciplines, and Cultures,” Anchorage, Alaska; <http://www.wdafs.org/Anchorage2005/index.htm>.

17-24: Coastweek; <http://living-edge.org/>.

19-23: Oceans 2005, sponsored by the Marine Technology Society (MTS) and the IEEE Oceanic Engineering Society (OES), Washington, D.C.; <http://www.oceans2005.org/>.

24: National Estuaries Day; <http://www.estuaries.gov/>.

30-October 6: 8th World Wilderness Congress, Anchorage, Alaska; <http://www.8wwc.org/index.htm>.

October

23-27: First International Marine Protected Areas Congress, Geelong, Australia, <http://www.impacongress.org/>.

31-November 2: Clean Beaches Council hosts second annual Sustainable Beaches Conference, St. Petersburg, Florida; <http://www.cleanbeaches.org/events/summit/2005/>.

Recent Additions to the MPA Virtual Library

The spring 2005 issue of the Marine Technology Society Journal (39, 1) focuses on the contribution of acoustic telemetry to the design of marine protected areas (MPAs). Papers address key questions such as use of this data to determine whether a reserve is located and sized to protect species of interest, and whether there is spillover of exploited fish from reserves into fished areas. A table of contents for the “Acoustic Tracking of Marine Fishes: Implications for the Design of Marine Protected Areas” special issue is available at: http://www.mtsociety.org/publications/journal_form.cfm

An article in PLoS Biology (a peer-reviewed open access journal) discusses overfishing and the decline of global fisheries, the attempt of fisheries science to improve the quality of data on the impact to ecosystems, and management strategies for the recovery of depleted fisheries, including aquaculture and the establishment of marine reserve networks. “Troubled Waters: the Future of Global Fisheries is available at:

http://biology.plosjournals.org/archive/1545-885/2/4/pdf/10.1371_journal.pbio.0020113-L.pdf

An article by Callum Roberts and others in “Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences” addresses the concerns of the fishing industry about the use of marine reserves, and looks at how marine reserves and other fishery management tools can be used together for sustainability. It notes that large marine reserve networks must be an important part of fishery management for both sustainable fisheries and conservation of marine biodiversity and ecosystems. “The role of marine reserves in achieving sustainable fisheries” is available at:

<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/archive/00000359/01/robertscm7.pdf>

NOAA’s National Ocean Service has released an operations plan for the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve. The plan was prepared by the National Marine Sanctuary Program in consultation with the State of Hawaii and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It serves as the management guide for the reserve, and contains action plans for each of the reserve’s program areas: operations; education and outreach; native Hawaiian cultural resources; maritime heritage; research and monitoring; mapping; response, damage assessment and restoration; marine debris; enforcement; and sanctuary designation. “Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Final Reserve Operations Plan” is available at:

http://www.hawaiiireef.noaa.gov/PDFs/Final_ROP.pdf

November

1-3: MPA Federal Advisory Committee meeting, Gulf of Mexico (location TBD); http://mpa.gov/fac/fac_meetings.html.

4-7: 14th U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Meeting, Palau; <http://www.coralreef.gov/taskforce/meetings.html>.

18-20: Maritime Heritage Education Conference; Nauticus: the National Maritime Center Norfolk, Virginia; <http://www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/mhec/>.

28-December 2: Third International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals, Miami, Florida; <http://www.conference.ifas.ufl.edu/coral/>.