

The Draft Framework for Developing the National System of Marine Protected Areas: Highlights



History: Why Does the Nation Need a National System of MPAs?

- For decades, government agencies in the United States have been establishing marine protected areas (MPAs). In fact, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, NOAA, and many states have their own systems of MPAs. While sites from these systems sometimes overlap, there are no overarching guidelines to help coordinate effective ecosystem management across these agencies and programs. In particular, the nation does not yet fully understand:
 - what marine resources the nation protects,
 - how well these resources are protected, and
 - what, if any, further management may be required to make them more effective.
- Since 2001, the National Marine Protected Areas Center has been working to analyze and understand the nation's MPAs. The MPA Center has been collaborating with government and non-government partners across the country to develop a national MPA system that comprises the numerous MPA sites and networks that already exist. The MPA Center has reached out to stakeholders who both support and oppose MPAs and has successfully built consensus on the values and uses of a national system.

The Draft Framework for Developing the National System of MPAs

Our nation's guide for collaboratively building an efficient and effective national system of marine protected area is now being revised based on extensive public comment, and will be finalized in early 2008. It:

- Defines an effective national system built in partnership with federal and state/territory partners and in consultation with non-government stakeholders.
- Describes goals and objectives based on scientific information, agency cooperation, and meaningful stakeholder input.
- Outlines processes to develop the initial national system, based on existing sites.
- Explains how to enhance MPA stewardship and coordination, identify national system gaps, and identify future conservation priorities.
- Explains a process for monitoring and evaluating MPA programs.

Benefits of an Effective National System of MPAs

- Encourages government agency cooperation.
- Increases efficient protection of our marine resources.
- Contributes to economic health through potential opportunities for tourism and recreation businesses.
- Improves public access to scientific information and decision-making about the nation's marine resources.

For More Information

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