

NOAA Progress Report:

STATUS OF MPA EXECUTIVE ORDER 13158 AND
NATIONAL MARINE PROTECTED AREAS CENTER
FISCAL YEARS 2002 AND 2003

progress report



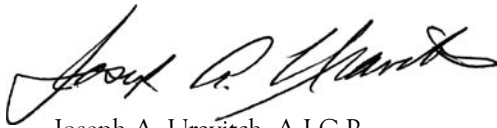
Message from National Marine Protected Areas Center Director

Fiscal year 2002 was an important one for the National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center. The Center received its first funding from Congress, a \$3 million appropriation. While some MPA initiative tasks began in 2001, including the development of MPA.gov and a collection of basic information about federal sites for the national inventory, fiscal year 2002 funds allowed NOAA to build a foundation to sustain these efforts. This growth continued in 2003 with a \$4 million appropriation.

Much of early 2002 was devoted to developing basic structures, including the preparation of plans, hiring core staff, and initiating contacts with stakeholders and potential national, regional, and local partners. Towards the end of the fiscal year, the three National MPA Center units, which include the Science Institute in California, the Training and Technical Assistance Institute in South Carolina, and the headquarters office in Maryland, were fully operating and most staff was on board. Fiscal year 2003 saw continued improvements including the hiring of the Center's first regional coordinator in Boston, Massachusetts; the writing of a National MPA Social Science Research Strategy; and completion of "Understanding MPAs," a course designed to provide a common understanding about MPAs for the public and stakeholders.

The National MPA Center's focus for 2002 and 2003 was on forging partnerships and becoming a stronger resource for information about the nation's MPAs. With a solid staff in place and various projects well underway, the National MPA Center is ready for the challenges and opportunities to come.

Sincerely,



Joseph A. Uravitch, A.I.C.P.
Director, National Marine Protected Areas Center

Background on Executive Order 13158 and the National Marine Protected Areas Center

The MPA Initiative and National MPA Center

Marine protected areas (MPAs) have been established throughout the United States by federal, state, commonwealth, territorial, local, and tribal authorities over the past several decades through a variety of laws and regulations to accomplish a number of specific purposes. As a result, the nation has a collection of sites managing portions of the marine and coastal environment, however, little thought had been given to a comprehensive, integrated approach to protecting the nation's natural and cultural marine heritage. Recognizing this deficiency, in early 2000 the President's Council on Environmental Quality convened a team of representatives from federal management agencies to craft a mechanism which would bring some order to nationwide efforts to conserve biodiversity, preserve submerged cultural resources, manage fisheries, and enhance the longevity of species and habitats within the nation's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes through MPAs.

Based on the team's work, Presidential Executive Order 13158 was signed in May 2000. The Executive Order directs federal agencies to work closely with states, territories, commonwealths, tribes, local trustees, and other stakeholders to develop a scientifically based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. It also states that the national MPA system should represent diverse U.S. marine ecosystems and the nation's natural and cultural resources. In addition, the Executive Order established the National Marine Protected Areas Center within the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in cooperation with the Department of the Interior.

National MPA Center Organizational Structure

The National MPA Center consists of three main components. The headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland manages the Executive Order; develops policy; supports the MPA Federal Advisory Committee; coordinates inventory efforts; and pro-

vides outreach, education, and coordination support at national and regional levels. The National MPA Center also includes two institutes that are sources of specific nationwide technical expertise. The Science Institute, based in Santa Cruz, California, provides a bridge between the science and policy of MPAs by fostering targeted research, hosting workshops, assessing threats to vital habitats and resources, measuring the effectiveness of existing management approaches, and analyzing socioeconomic factors that may impact MPAs. The Training and Technical Assistance Institute, integrated with NOAA's Coastal Services Center in Charleston, South Carolina, provides training, needs assessments, and technical support for resource managers, resource users, and others involved with MPAs.

The National MPA Center also hosts a northeast regional representative who sits in the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program office. This regional coordinator serves as the on-the-ground link to the MPA Center for New England entities involved in MPA-related activities.

Coordination within NOAA Programs

Although located within the NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, the National MPA Center works cooperatively with other NOS offices such as the Special Projects Office, the Coastal Services Center, International Programs Office, Estuarine Reserves Division, and National Marine Sanctuary Program. The Center also works closely with NOAA Fisheries at both the headquarters and regional levels and with the NOAA Library, part of the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service.

Coordination with the Department of the Interior

To carry out the Executive Order tasks, the National MPA Center coordinates with many federal offices including the Department of the Interior's National Park Service, Minerals Management Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Joint efforts include managing the MPA Federal Advisory Committee, creating the MPA.gov website, collecting the ma-

background

rine managed areas inventory, and other projects. The exchanges that occurred in 2002 and 2003 on these projects ultimately led to the process of re-establishing the Federal Interagency Marine Protected Areas Working Group, which had not met since January 2001. The Working Group is made up of representatives of diverse federal agencies involved in marine protected areas and helps to coordinate federal implementation of actions called for under the Executive Order.

National MPA Center Mission

The mission of the National MPA 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.

National MPA Center Vision Statement

The vision of the National MPA Center is: An effective, science-based, and collaborative national system of marine protected areas conserving marine ecosystems and cultural resources throughout the U.S.

National MPA Center Goals

The National MPA Center has three goals, which stem from the MPA Executive Order:

- Develop the framework for a national system of MPAs
- Improve MPA stewardship and effectiveness
- Facilitate national and regional coordination of MPA activities

GOAL: Develop the Framework for a National System of MPAs

Marine protected areas (MPAs) within the United States are currently created by a myriad of agencies with diverse objectives. Establishing and managing MPAs continues to rest in the hands of federal, state, territorial, commonwealth, tribal, and local governments. As directed by the Executive Order, the National MPA Center initiated the process to develop a framework for an effective, science-based national system of MPAs. The system will be comprehensive, representing diverse U.S. marine ecosystems and the nation's natural and cultural resources. Several efforts were completed in 2002 and 2003 to support this goal.

MPA Federal Advisory Committee

In 2002, the Department of Commerce and the Department of the Interior considered nearly 350 applicants who had been nominated by organizations and individuals for possible appointment to the MPA Federal Advisory Committee. A panel of experts from both departments selected candidates who represent the broad spectrum of interested parties throughout the nation, and the Department of Commerce appointed 30 individuals to the Federal Advisory Committee in 2003. Members of the Committee represent a broad stakeholder community, including scientists, academia, commercial and recreational fishermen, business interests, resource users and managers, and environmentalists.

The MPA Federal Advisory Committee held its first meeting in Washington, D.C. in June 2003. During their second meeting in San Mateo, California in November 2003, the members elected Dr. Daniel Bromley, a professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin, as their chair, and Dr. Bonnie McCay, a professor in the Department of Human Ecology at Rutgers University, as their vice-chair. The Committee also proposed establishing three subcommittees to focus on a national system of MPAs, MPA stewardship and effectiveness, and national and regional coordination of MPA efforts. The Department of Commerce approved the subcommittees in April 2004.

The Committee meets at least biannually to discuss and develop recommendations on implementing Section 4 of the Executive Order for the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior. Federal Advisory Committee transcripts and minutes of the Committee's meetings, member biographies, and links to agendas, background documents, public comments, and presentations can be found on MPA.gov at: <http://www.mpa.gov/fac/fac.html>.

MPA Terminology

The ongoing confusion over MPA terminology continues to complicate the national dialogue about whether, when, and how to use this management tool to sustain the health of the nation's marine ecosystems and cultural resources. To clarify discussion about various MPA issues, the National MPA Center developed a common terminology and classification system for U.S. marine protected areas. The classification system describes the many types and purposes of MPAs based on six elements: primary conservation goal, level of protection, permanence of protection, constancy of protection, scale of protection, and allowable extractive activities. By defining each of these elements, individual MPAs can be described based on their goals and objectives, avoiding the confusing use of common names (such as sanctuary, reserve, park), which may have different meanings in various state and federal programs.

Marine Managed Areas Inventory

The purpose of the marine managed areas (MMA) inventory is to provide a wide range of information to develop a comprehensive picture of the nation's marine managed areas. The data collected include a general description; and site characteristics such as location, purpose, and type of site; as well as detailed information on natural and cultural resources, legal authorities, site management, and regulations and restrictions. The goals of the MMA inventory are to:

- Help regional, local, state, and federal managers, scientists, non-governmental organizations, and others to better analyze and understand what sites exist and the management goals of those sites.

- Compile data to assist in the analysis and assessments defined in the Executive Order on issues such as threats to MMAs and effectiveness of MMAs in protecting natural and cultural resources.
- Provide a comprehensive information base to assist in the development of a national system of MPAs.

Examples of MMAs included in the inventory are national parks, national wildlife refuges, national marine sanctuaries, national estuarine research reserves, fisheries management areas, state beaches, and state parks.

The MMA inventory is designed to be as inclusive as possible, while maintaining a consistent and systematic approach to adding sites into the database. The criteria used to collect the MMA inventory are a broader and more inclusive interpretation of the MPA definition stated in the MPA Executive Order 13158. The MMA inventory will be used to form a pool from which sites may later be considered for placement on a list of MPAs called for by the Executive Order. In addition, the National MPA Center will use the information in the MMA inventory to evaluate the potential impacts and effectiveness of existing MPAs on the resources they protect.

In July 2003, NOAA and the Department of the Interior published a Federal Register Notice requesting public comment on the proposed criteria, definitions, and data fields used in the development of an inventory of existing U.S. MMAs. Comments were received from Congress, non-governmental organizations, Fishery Management Councils, and private citizens. By the end of 2003, NOAA and Interior staff completed all comment reviews and began preparing formal responses.

The inter-agency MMA inventory team held regular status meetings throughout 2002 and 2003. The team is currently working with six federal programs and 28 of the 35 coastal and Great Lake states, territories and commonwealths in the data collection and review process. Since data collection for the MMA inventory began, the federal programs have submitted all sites for the inventory for a total of nearly 300 sites and GIS data is 97 percent complete. Several programs are in the process of completing data forms and several are updating data that was entered in 2001. The National MPA Center continues to work with coastal and Great Lakes states to gather data, have that data reviewed and approved, and ultimately posted on MPA.gov at: <http://www.mpa.gov/inventory/inventory.html>. In addition, the National MPA Center has plans to work with tribes to begin collecting their MMA data in 2004 and 2005. The National MPA Center estimates that when the inventory is complete, there will be between 1,000 and 1,500 MMA sites nationwide.

GOAL: Improve MPA Stewardship and Effectiveness

The National MPA Center aims to improve MPA stewardship and effectiveness by strengthening capacity for planning, management, and evaluation within the MPA community. Creating and implementing effective management strategies requires the awareness, understanding, and application of best practices by management and all affected stakeholder groups. The National MPA Center targets MPA management staff at the local, state, regional, tribal, and national levels, and reaches out to those affected by management decisions to provide opportunities for substantive involvement in decision-making.

Science and Analysis

MPA Social Science Research Strategy

The National MPA Center compiled an MPA Social Science Research Strategy based on a workshop held in 2002 with several agency and non-governmental partners. The strategy builds the capacity for and commitment to social science research by proposing practical ways to meet priority research needs and addressing issues that cross social science disciplines. The report can be found in the on MPA.gov at: http://www.mpa.gov/virtual_library/Publications/Strategy_11504.pdf.

Regional Social Science Research Strategy Workshops

In August 2003, the National MPA Center implemented the first in a series of planned regional “Social Science Research Strategy” workshops. Held in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, this workshop brought together regional social scientists and MPA practitioners from southern Florida and the Caribbean. One outcome of the workshop was the development of a regional research program for South Florida and the Caribbean. A second workshop was held in Savannah, Georgia for the South Atlantic region, which included U.S. waters from Virginia to South Florida. The Center will host additional meetings in 2004-2005 to identify and prioritize regional research needs specific to MPA planning, management, and

evaluation and to help with the planning of comprehensive and individualized MPA social science research strategies.

National Natural Science Research Strategy

The National MPA Center partnered with the Communications Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS) to prepare a natural science research strategy to identify biophysical (e.g., ecology, oceanography, fisheries, etc.) research themes and topics vital to MPA design, management and evaluation. A draft of the strategy is expected to be ready in 2004. A series of regional workshops will then be planned to identify regional priorities.

MPA Technology Needs Assessment

In 2003, the National MPA Center gathered representatives from government, industry, and academia to assess MPA-related applications of technology, gauge technical capacity within the marine management community, and evaluate associated needs. The results, incorporated into the MPA Technology Needs Assessment, will guide the National MPA Center and its supporting institutes as they design products and services to support a national system of MPAs. The assessment focused on the technological capacity within the management community (i.e., hardware, software, and expertise) and current applications of technology in MPA planning, implementation, and evaluation. The report can be found on MPA.gov at: http://www.csc.noaa.gov/mpa/MPA_TechnologyNeedsAssessment.pdf.

Training

Education Workshops

In 2002, regional education workshops were held in Wye, Maryland; Morro Bay, California; and Two Harbors, Minnesota, reaching more than 100 educators who work with MPAs on the east coast, west coast and in the Great Lakes region. The workshops increased awareness of MPAs among educators, fostered educational partnerships, and promoted the inclusion of MPA-related themes in education materials. A product of these workshops was a free cloth poster with special MPA artwork provided by Jim Toomey, creator of Sherman’s Lagoon.

GIS Training

The National MPA Center provided training in the use of geographic information systems (GIS) through two courses: Introduction to ArcGIS and Coastal Applications Using ArcGIS. Both Environmental Systems Research Institution-certified courses have been tailored specifically to meet the needs of coastal resource managers. In an effort to introduce coastal managers to the fundamentals of performing MPA site analyses with the aid of a GIS, the National MPA Center also developed the Siting Marine Protected Areas module that has been incorporated into a course titled “Coastal Applications.” The National MPA Center has trained NOAA staff members from Fisheries, the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, and the National Marine Sanctuary Program, among others.

Managing Visitor Use in Coastal and Marine Protected Areas

The National MPA Center taught visitor use management workshops for coastal and marine protected area resource managers and associated environmental professionals at different locations around the United States in 2003, including the Apalachicola Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Florida and St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands.

MPA Management Effectiveness Initiative

The National MPA Center is participating in an MPA Management Effectiveness Initiative, which is an ongoing joint enterprise involving the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas–Marine, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and NOAA’s National Ocean Service. These organizations are collaborating to improve the management of MPAs by providing managers, planners, and other decision makers with a guidebook containing methods and indicators to assess the effectiveness of MPA sites.

“Understanding MPAs” Workshop

In September 2003, the National MPA Center piloted the newly developed “Understanding Marine Protected Areas” workshop at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, California. The one-day workshop provides training to stakeholders

(including the general public) on the basic principles and issues surrounding MPAs. The National MPA Center has partnered with Coastal America to bring “Understanding MPAs” to a number of aquariums that are designated as Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers. The course was also held at the Seattle Aquarium and the National Aquarium in Baltimore, and more workshops are planned in 2004 and 2005.

Additional Courses

The National MPA Center’s Training and Technical Assistance Institute also offered the following courses in 2003:

- Public Issues and Conflict Management
- Project Design and Evaluation
- Hazards Training
- The Coastal Zone Management Role in Managing Hazards
- Web Content Design and Evaluation
- Conducting Training Needs Assessments
- Negotiating for Coastal Resources
- Project Design and Evaluation
- Survival Skills for Managing Coastal Resources

Technical Assistance

Digital Boundaries for National Marine Sanctuaries

The National MPA Center worked with the National Marine Sanctuary Program on developing digital marine boundaries and accompanying legal descriptions for all 13 sanctuaries. Efforts continue into 2004 and include the analysis of the legal definitions of the boundaries and the development of digital representations. A peripheral product of this effort will be a document detailing the development of draft standards and methods for the establishment of marine protected areas boundaries.

Enforcement Scoping Project

Both the MPA Needs Assessment and the MPA Technology Needs Assessment identified the importance of better understanding enforcement methods and techniques. To begin to address this, the National MPA Center researched and synthesized existing informa-

tion related to MPA enforcement. The resulting report, due in 2004, will examine current enforcement methodology and describe the main enforcement-related issues and priorities for marine protected areas sites. The report will also outline the numerous enforcement entities involved with MPAs and their respective jurisdictions.

Case Studies of Lessons Learned

The MPA Needs Assessment conducted in 2002 revealed that both MPA managers and stakeholders want to use lessons learned from past MPA processes. National MPA Center staff researched and documented five U.S. MPA establishment processes. These five case studies demonstrated processes ranging in geographic location, purpose, and government involvement. The final report, titled Marine Protected Area (MPA) Process Review:

Case Studies of Five MPA Establishment Processes includes findings from stakeholder interviews that summarize the strengths and limitations of past MPA processes and provides recommendations for future and ongoing MPA planning efforts. The report, published in May 2003, can be found on MPA.gov at: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/mpa/MPALessonsLearned.pdf>.

Marine Boundaries Best Practices Handbook

The National MPA Center is working with the Coastal Services Center and other NOAA and Department of the Interior partners to produce a handbook of best practices and steps that boundary crafters and GIS technicians can follow to create viable digital boundaries for marine managed areas. The Marine Boundaries Working Group of the Federal Geographic Data Committee began the project in 2003, and experts from various federal agencies have contributed to the manual. The handbook has been drafted and will be completed in 2005.

MarIS Mapping Tool

The National MPA Center developed a mapping tool called MarIS (Marine Information Service) for users unfamiliar with geographic information

systems (GIS). Although MarIS functions within standard GIS software, it simplifies the format and allows the user to review data and generate standard maps for presentations, reports, or press releases. Developed in partnership with the National Marine Sanctuary Program and the National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science, MarIS was delivered to national marine sanctuaries in California in 2003.

Navigating MPAs

In order to promote awareness of the nation's MPAs within the maritime community, the National MPA Center and NOAA's Office of Coast Survey jointly developed "Navigating the Nation's Marine Protected Areas," a project incorporating key information about existing MPAs into the Office of Coast Survey's Coast Pilot and other navigational products. Information inserted into these publications will assist mariners and other users in understanding the location, purpose, jurisdictions, and allowed activities within these MPAs, thereby helping to promote their protection.

Providers Network

In addition to providing direct training and technical assistance, the National MPA Center, took several steps in 2003 to facilitate managers' access to external training and technical assistance resources. Staff members have been developing a database of existing providers as part of its goal to serve as a referral service for managers seeking assistance, information, and training on MPA-related topics. The list of providers spans governmental agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and private entities.

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Tool

In an effort to reduce collisions between vessels and the endangered North Atlantic right whale and other marine mammals, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary partnered with the National MPA Center to develop a spatial analysis tool that creates zoning alternatives for MPA managers. Programming for this tool minimizes the risk of injury or mortality to marine mammals and the economic impact on the user community. By using this tool, the Sanctuary Advisory Committee can evaluate various vessel routes, speeds, and operating costs.

GOAL: Facilitate National and Regional Coordination of MPA Activities

The National MPA Center works to facilitate the integration of local MPA sites, foster meaningful stakeholder participation in regional activities, and improve national and international linkages across MPA programs.

International Coordination

The National MPA Center has coordinated with various international parties on global MPA issues. For example, the National MPA Center and the Brazilian Environment Ministry's National Protected Area Program discussed the status of MPA activity in the United States and the potential for future information exchanges. In addition, the National MPA Center continued to work with the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) and the National Ocean Service's International Programs Office on marine projects under the Conservation of Biodiversity program. The CEC has focused on coordinating, mapping, and inventorying MPAs in Canada, the United States, and Mexico in its effort to design an integrated North American network of MPAs. Past and present projects featuring National MPA Center involvement include mapping marine and estuarine ecosystems of North America and determining management effectiveness of MPAs. The National MPA Center also worked with a non-governmental organization-driven process called the Baja to Bering Initiative, which is involved in identifying corridors and enhancing linkages between MPAs throughout North America.

The National MPA Center's northeast regional coordinator works closely with the Gulf of Maine Council programs and supports the NOAA representative to the Council. The Council consists of representatives from U.S. and Canadian state, provincial, and federal governmental agencies that seek to maintain and enhance environmental quality in the Gulf of Maine for sustainable resource use by existing and future generations.

National Coordination

The National MPA Center was created because Executive Order 13158 identified a need for an entity to coordinate with federal agencies, states, tribes, and local governments on MPA activities. The National MPA Center's key responsibilities include consulting with stakeholders on the design of a national system of MPAs and working with federal agencies to ensure that no MPAs are harmed by federal actions. The National MPA Center has a variety of communication methods to keep federal agencies, site managers, and other partners apprised of the latest MPA-related activities and news. These communication methods include an inter-agency weekly email update and two monthly newsletters (MPA Connections and the Information Exchange for Marine Educators).

Federal Agency Briefings

Among other outreach activities at the federal level, the National MPA Center participated in the annual meeting of the U.S. Navy's natural resource managers. The participants learned about possible areas of naval interest in MPA-related activities. In addition, the National MPA Center Director briefed the President's Council on Environmental Quality about the status of Executive Order 13158. Additional briefings to the Council on Environmental Quality will occur in 2004.

National MPA Center Retreat

The National MPA Center held its first annual retreat in January 2003, which involved staff from both NOAA and the Department of the Interior. The retreat focused on the MPA Executive Order, long-term priorities of the National MPA Center, criteria for success, the Center's work towards a framework for a national system of MPAs, external communications, and partner agencies. The retreat reinforced the National MPA Center's commitment to fostering better relationships with all communities that use and access the nations Great Lakes, coasts, and oceans. One of the major accomplishments was the crafting of a mission statement and vision statement for the National MPA Center. Participants also refined the National MPA Center's goals.

Regional Coordination

Although protected areas management is place-based ecosystem management, regional coordination offers an opportunity to link management efforts at individual sites into larger, more effective networks, and to address issues of regional importance. The National MPA Center has supported coordination in both New England and the west coast, through a regional coordinator in Boston, Massachusetts and as an ancillary activity of the Science Institute based in Monterey, California. Many projects and activities were supported through this regional National MPA Center presence. Some of the 2002 and 2003 regional projects included an “Ocean Zoning” workshop organized by the Gulf of Maine Council, a “Fisherman’s Forum” held by the Pacific Marine Conservation Council, and quarterly NOAA coordination meetings for the northeast on MPA-related activities. Plans are underway to locate regional coordinators within all U.S. regions.

Several National MPA Center efforts link geographically separated regions. For example, the National MPA Center assisted the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program in its assessment of the state of marine managed areas in regions with coral reefs. Also, the National MPA Center is developing Online Regional Information Centers that will provide up-to-date information about the goals and objectives of planned MPAs, key public events, and ongoing reviews of environmental and management plans across the U.S.

Regional Information Centers

In 2002, in response to a need for coordination, the Science Institute in partnership with the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS) developed a web-based information tool, www.PacificMPA.org, to serve as a central location for government MPA processes on the west coast. Designed to inform all stakeholders of MPA-related projects, meetings, and initiatives occurring on the west coast, this Pacific MPA information center strives to increase coordination and collaboration among users. Plans are underway to develop a series of these regional information centers for the other U.S. regions. Online regional information centers will provide

up-to-date information about the goals and objectives of planned MPAs, key public events, and ongoing reviews of environmental and management plans across the U.S.

Tribal Coordination

The National MPA Center worked with the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, as well as tribal members, to discuss how the National MPA Center could best coordinate with tribes and engage tribal participation in

PARTNERS

The National MPA Center recognizes its partners who assisted in achieving these accomplishments.

- Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fishing
- American Museum of Natural History
- Aquarium of the Pacific
- Brazilian government
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- California Sea Grant
- Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Parks Canada, and Environment Canada
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Commonwealth of Virginia
- Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea
- Council for Environmental Cooperation
- Coastal America
- Coastal States Organization
- Duke University
- Environmental Defense
- Government of Guam
- Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands
- Gulf of Maine Council
- Marine Conservation Biology Institute
- Mexican government
- Minerals Management Service

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PARTNERS (CONTINUED)

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| Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant | State of Delaware |
| MIT Sea Grant | State of Florida |
| Monterey Bay Aquarium | State of Georgia |
| National Estuarine Research Reserves Systems | State of Hawaii |
| National Marine Sanctuary Program | State of Maine |
| National Park Service | State of Maryland |
| National Sea Grant College Program | State of Michigan |
| Native American Fish and Wildlife Society | State of Mississippi |
| New England Aquarium | State of New Hampshire |
| New York Department of State | State of New Jersey |
| Northeast Fisheries Management Council | State of New York |
| Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission | State of Oregon |
| Ocean Wilderness Network | State of Rhode Island |
| Oregon State University | State of Washington |
| Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Association | Surfrider Foundation |
| Pacific Fisheries Management Council | The Nature Conservancy |
| Pacific Marine Conservation Council | The Ocean Conservancy |
| Partnership for International Studies of Coastal Oceans | University of California, Santa Barbara |
| Point Reyes Bird Observatory | University of California, Santa Cruz |
| Rhode Island Sea Grant | University of Miami |
| Save our Shores | University of Rhode Island, Coastal Resources Center |
| SeaWeb | University of South Carolina, Baruch Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences |
| South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council | University of South Florida |
| State of Alabama | University of Washington |
| State of Alaska | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| State of California | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| State of Connecticut | West Virginia University |

the marine managed areas inventory. Discussions on tribal coordination were held with agencies and organizations such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, NOAA Fisheries, and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. To increase internal education, NOAA Fisheries and the National MPA Center organized a seminar entitled "Understanding American Indian Culture and Politics" for NOAA employees that work with tribes.

Outreach and Education

The education and outreach activities of the National MPA Center increase understanding and awareness of MPAs among government agencies, coastal and marine educators, managers, and stakeholders. The National MPA Center education and outreach activities support the development of programming that incorporates MPA themes and messages across all Center goals.

MPA.gov Redevelopment

In late 2003, the National MPA Center began the process to overhaul the national website on MPAs, MPA.gov, which was originally launched in 2000. After extensive review and input from internal and external audiences, the site was redeveloped, content was updated, new MPA sections were created, and the site was given a fresh look. With its relaunch in early 2004, the website now provides information about the status of activities under the MPA Executive Order. The website also includes definitions and common MPA terminology, a virtual library with over 1,000 resources, specifics on the Federal Advisory Committee, updates on the inventory of marine managed areas, facts sheets, frequently asked questions, a glossary, and more.

MPA Connections

The National MPA Center's monthly newsletter, *MPA Connections*, celebrated its one-year anniversary in November 2003. The newsletter provides updates on the National MPA Center's resources and opportunities, including training, research, management tools, publications and studies. *MPA Connections* is distributed via listserv to more than 2,400 recipients worldwide and is archived on MPA.gov. It was the first NOAA newsletter and one of the first conservation newsletters to be promoted on FirstGov.gov.

Clarifying Misconceptions about Marine Protected Areas

Among the highlights featured in *MPA Connections* is an ongoing series entitled "Clarifying Misconceptions about Marine Protected Areas." Topics have included definitions of MPAs, history of MPAs, MPA legislative authorities at the state and federal levels, and public involvement on MPA decision-making. The series was made into a fact sheet available on MPA.gov at http://www.mpa.gov/information_tools/pdf/Factsheets/mpamisconceptions2.pdf.

Information Exchange for Marine Educators

As a service to marine educators, the National MPA Center began distributing a monthly email newslet-

ter for coastal and marine educators, titled Information Exchange. The newsletter features a list of MPA educational programs, new opportunities, calls for abstracts, and websites of general interest to marine educators. The Information Exchange is available on MPA.gov and through the Department of the Interior's National Park Service's Research Learning Centers Clearinghouse educational website at: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/learningcenters/>.

MPA Library

The MPA library grew considerably in 2003. It now includes more than 1,000 resources which are searchable on MPA.gov. Library staff developed a controlled vocabulary list of keyword search terms for use in searching the collection on MPA.gov. The list is a combination of two vocabularies: the Library of Congress Subject Headings and the Food and Agriculture Organization's Aquatic Science and Fisheries Abstracts thesaurus. The list contains 2,500 key words and helps users browse the MPA collection more efficiently.

Fishermen's Forums

The National MPA Center participated in the launching of a fishermen's forum. The forums featured workshops and discussions on MPAs in general and marine reserves. These public forums were designed to improve the communication between fishermen and MPA agencies and scientists.

CONFERENCES

As part of its mission, the National MPA Center has participated in and/or sponsored numerous conferences and workshops in 2002 and 2003. In some cases, National MPA Center staff members were presenters and facilitators. Many of the following conferences and workshops allowed the National MPA Center to display its latest promotional exhibits, which in 2003 included new posters on marine protected areas, the MPA Library, and MPA legal authorities, as well as other outreach materials and reports.

American Fisheries Society Annual Meetings

Annual Meeting of the All Islands Coastal Zone Management Programs

Central California Fishermen's Forum on MPAs

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CONFERENCES (CONTINUED)

Channel Islands Marine Reserves Monitoring Workshop

Coastal and Marine Resources and Property Workshop Coastal GeoTools Conference

Coastal States Organization Annual Meeting

Coastal Zone '03 Conference

Commission on Environmental Cooperation Workshops

Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of Maine Workshop

Federal Fisheries Management Council Chairs and Executive Directors Annual Meeting

George Basin/Puget Sound Research Conference

George Wright Society Protected Areas Conference

Groundfish Habitat Technical Review Committee Meeting

Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute 54th Annual Meeting

Gulf of Maine Council Meetings

International Association of Marine Science Libraries

Joint Ventures: Partners in Stewardship Conference

Maine Fisherman's Forum

Managing Our Nation's Fisheries Conference

Massachusetts Ocean Management Task Force

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Joint Management Plan Review

Monterey Institute of International Studies Earth Day Celebration

National Association of Charterboat Operators Annual Meeting

National Estuarine Research Reserve System Education Workshop

National Estuarine Research Reserves System Annual Meeting

National Marine Educators Association Annual Meeting

National Marine Sanctuaries Educators Annual Meeting

National Marine Sanctuary Maritime Heritage Program Annual Meeting

National Marine Sanctuary Program Educators Meeting

National Marine Sanctuary Program Research Coordinators Annual Meeting

National Marine Sanctuary Program Shipwreck Database Workshop

National Marine Sanctuary Program Submerged Cultural Resources Workshop

National MPA Center Science Institute Social Science Workshop

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Conferences

New England Fishery Management Council Meetings

North American Association for Environmental Education Conference

Northwest Atlantic Coastal Indicators Workshop

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Tribal Marine Protected Areas Workshop

Science and Management of Protected Areas Association Conference

Southeast Coastal Ocean Science Conference and Workshop

Sportfishing Leadership Conference

State of the Beach, Surfrider Foundation

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan Review Meetings

Sustaining Seascapes

The Coastal Society Meetings

Train the Trainer Education Workshops

U.S. Navy Natural Resource Managers Annual Meeting

World Parks Congress

Women's Aquatic Network MPA and Educator Workshops

Integrating Fisheries and MPA Science

The National MPA Center worked with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to coordinate workshops and technical assistance concerning the use of MPAs as a fisheries management tool. The National MPA Center and NOAA

Fisheries supported four MPA “Workshops for Stakeholders,” held by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council primarily for commercial fisherman. In addition, the National MPA Center assisted the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council with the technical aspects of MPA work, such as map generation.

For More Information

**For more information on the
National Marine Protected Area Center, please visit
<http://mpa.gov> or contact mpainfo@noaa.gov.**