Implementing The National System of Marine Protected Areas:

Nomination Process

www.mpa.gov

The U.S. is implementing a comprehensive, science-based and effective national system of marine protected areas (MPAs). The national system will include eligible existing MPAs across all levels of government to protect important habitats and resources. For more information, visit www.mpa.gov.

Nomination Process for Existing Sites to Join the National System

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

There are three entry criteria for existing MPAs to join the national system (plus a fourth for cultural heritage). Sites that meet the following three criteria (four for cultural heritage) are 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; must have site goals and objectives and call for monitoring or evaluation of those goals and objectives).
3. Contributes to at least one priority conservation objective as listed in the Framework.
4. Cultural heritage MPAs must also conform to criteria for the National Register for Historic Places.

The MPA Center will use existing information from the MPA Inventory to determine which sites meet the first two criteria. These identified sites will be potentially eligible MPAs. The managing entities of potentially eligible MPAs will be sent a nomination package and invited to nominate some or all of their potentially eligible sites for inclusion in the national system. To do so, they will be asked to document how each nominated MPA meets criterion number three above.

Ensuring Public Participation

All nominated sites will be available for public comment. The public will be notified through a *Federal Register* notice, information on www.mpa.gov, and other targeted outreach. The MPA Center will receive, evaluate and forward public comment to the relevant managing entity or entities, which will then reaffirm or withdraw the nomination based on public comment received and other factors deemed relevant. After final MPA Center review, mutually agreed upon MPAs will be accepted into the national system.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) held a first round of nominations in Fall 2008, which resulted in an initial group of 225 sites accepted into the national system. MPAs newly accepted into the national system will be publicly announced by NOAA and DOI. They also will be added to the official List of National System MPAs, which will be made available to the public via the Federal Register, the website www.mpa.gov, and other means.

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NOAA's National Marine Protected Areas (MPA) Center's mission 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. The MPA Center works in partnership with federal, state, tribal, and local governments and stakeholders to develop a science-based, comprehensive national system of MPAs. These collaborative efforts will lead to a more efficient, effective use of MPAs now and in the future to conserve and sustain the nation's vital marine resources.

NATIONAL Marine Protected Areas CENTER

Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, NOAA Ocean Service, 1305 East West Hwy (N/ORM), Silver Spring, MD 20910

The national system nomination process will be held annually.

Draft Timeline for Second Nomination Process:

AUGUST 2009:

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

EARLY NOVEMBER 2009:

Nomination forms due

MID NOVEMBER 2009:

MPA Center makes list of nominated national system MPAs available for public review; notice in *Federal Register* and on www.mpa.gov.

MID JANUARY 2010:

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.

LATE JANUARY 2010:

MPA Center notifies the managing entities of accepted sites. NOAA and DOI make announcement of sites to join the National System of MPAs. Official List of National System sites posted on www.mpa.gov.

For more information on the National System of Marine Protected Areas, visit www.mpa.gov

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