

THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS: NOMINATION PROCESS

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAS

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. Recognizing that an MPA system is greater than the sum of its parts, these programs collaborate to strengthen conservation of the nation's natural and cultural marine heritage and represent its diverse ecosystems and resources. For frequently asked questions about the national system and other information, see 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 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 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 (and cultural heritage requirements, if relevant).

ENSURING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The list of 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 outreach. The MPA Center will receive, evaluate and forward public comment to the relevant managing entity, 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.



Currently, the national system includes 355 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 publicly announced and 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.

The Nation's Hub for Building Innovative Partnerships and Tools to Protect Special Ocean Places

www.mpa.gov



DRAFT TIMELINE FOR NOMINATION PROCESS:

JANUARY 2013:

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

MARCH 2013:

Nomination forms due

APRIL 2013:

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

MAY 2013:

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.

JUNE 2013:

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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