

CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

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The framework for a comprehensive, science-based and effective national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) in U.S. waters was published in November 2008, and is available at www.mpa.gov. The national system will include eligible existing MPAs across all levels of government, as well as those established in the future by agencies to protect important habitats and resources.

CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Marine protected areas (MPAs) have been established by federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local governments to protect a wide range of natural and cultural resources. The knowledge gained through careful research and analysis of historical artifacts and traditional cultural areas scattered throughout our oceans and Great Lakes is fundamental to understanding our nation's maritime heritage. By continuing to preserve, protect, and respect these nonrenewable resources, we can ensure that our nation's cultural resources are available for future generations.

PROTECTING THE NATION'S MARINE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The National System of MPAs has three goals of equal importance, each with accompanying conservation objectives: the conservation and management of natural heritage, cultural heritage, and sustainable production. The goal for cultural heritage is to advance the comprehensive conservation and management of marine cultural resources, defined as the broad array of stories, knowledge, people, places, structures, objects, and the associated environment that contribute to the maintenance of cultural identity and/or reveal the historic and contemporary human interactions with an ecosystem.

The national MPA system will strengthen the protection of cultural heritage resources by enhancing coordination among MPAs and conducting regional gap analyses to identify areas that contribute to the system's conservation objectives which would benefit from additional protection.

HOW WILL THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MPAs BENEFIT CULTURAL HERITAGE MPAs?

The MPA Center will partner with various agencies, states, and tribes that manage submerged cultural heritage resources to: collect, analyze, and distribute information about cultural heritage MPAs; raise public awareness of the value of cultural heritage resources and the MPAs that protect them; and build the capacity of cultural heritage resource managers through information and training. The benefits of these activities include increased capacity for cultural resource management, strategic planning and evaluation, as well as education and outreach programming.



A Hawaiian aboard the Hokulea, blowing a conch shell trumpet, requesting permission from the ancestral spirits to approach the island of Nihoa.

MPAs may have been established primarily to protect a submerged cultural artifact. These resources also may be present within MPAs established primarily for natural heritage conservation purposes. In some cases, cultural heritage resources may be known in an MPA, but do not receive targeted protection or management. Cultural heritage gap analysis will focus on identifying cultural heritage resources both inside and outside existing MPAs that would benefit from additional protection and management. It will also address cases where cultural heritage resources are known to exist, but whose exact location is not known (thus representing gaps in protection or knowledge).



A diver inspecting the tower of the U 701 Shipwreck in North Carolina. Photo credit: Steve Sellers, NOAA

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.



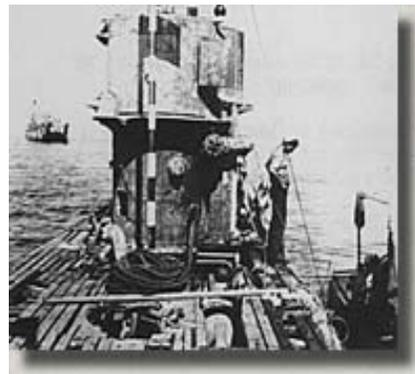
EXAMPLES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE MPAS IN THE NATIONAL SYSTEM

Examples of submerged cultural resources found in the United States include historic shipwrecks, submerged remains of historical structures, sunken naval vessels and aircraft, and submerged prehistoric remains, as well as sites that are paramount to a culture's identity and/or survival, such as a traditional cultural properties, tribal usual and accustomed areas, and sites of cultural significance to tribal or indigenous communities. The Framework's definition of "marine" includes only submerged areas (including the intertidal zone), so cultural resources on land such as lighthouses or remains of historic coastal settlements are not included within the national system of MPAs.



Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary: The Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve is the only National Marine Sanctuary established in the Great Lakes. This region contains approximately 160 shipwrecks that span more than a century of maritime history. The sanctuary strives to protect and preserve shipwrecks through research and education.

Kaho'olawe Island Reserve: Encompassing the island of Kaho'olawe and surrounding waters in Hawaii, the reserve is a former military range containing unexploded ordnance. Today, the Kaho'olawe Island Reserve Commission allows only permitted activities for Native Hawaiian cultural, spiritual, subsistence, preservation, restoration, and educational purposes.



U-1105 Black Panther Historic Shipwreck Preserve: Maryland's first shipwreck preserve, established in 1994, is the wreck site of U-1105, a WWII-era German submarine outfitted with an experimental rubber skin. Experiencing only one successful mission, U-1105 ultimately was sunk by the U.S. Navy as part of demolition and salvage experiments. The Preserve promotes the preservation of historic shipwreck sites while making them accessible to the general public.

DEFINING THE WAY FORWARD

A Cultural Heritage Resources Working Group (CHRWG) consisting of government and non-government archaeologists and historians, as well as tribal, Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, and other representatives has been established under the MPA Federal Advisory Committee. The CHRWG provides expertise and recommendations on the development of the cultural heritage component of the National System of MPAs. The group has defined the vision for the cultural heritage track as follows:

Achieving and maintaining healthy coastal and marine ecosystems requires a fundamental understanding of the relationships between people and the environment. Cultural heritage, which belongs to all people, emphasizes these connections, whether that heritage takes the material form of, for example, maritime resources (such as shipwrecks), natural resources (such as marine species and habitats), or sacred places. Through the national MPA system, cultural relationships among people and historic, natural, and place-based heritage resources are preserved and perpetuated in ways that recognize and share multiple cultural voices and knowledge systems for the benefit of all.

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