

CONNECTIONS

Newsletter of the National
Marine Protected Areas Center

December 2002

The mission of the National MPA Center is to provide information, tools, and strategies for the effective design and management of the nation's system of marine protected areas. *Connections* was established to meet continuing calls by agency and external stakeholders for information about MPA Center activities.

Table of Contents

Message from MPA Center Director Joseph Uravitch

U.S. Geological Survey to Map Richness of Aquatic Life in the Great Lakes

MPAs Introduction Course Under Development

Submerged Cultural Resources: Clues to Our Nation's History

MPA Center and COMPASS Launch www.PacificMPA.org

Question of the Month: Why is a national inventory of marine protected areas necessary?

Upcoming Events and Conferences

Message from MPA Center Director Joseph Uravitch

The National MPA Center is committed not only to providing information about MPAs nationally, but also to serving the needs of our nation's diverse coastal regions. In this edition, I'm pleased to announce www.PacificMPA.org, our west coast MPA information partnership with the Communications Partnership for Science and the Sea, the first of a number of such regional partnerships we intend to establish across the nation.

As part of this effort, the MPA Center is seeking partners to establish regional online MPA clearinghouses and, where appropriate, to support agency and stakeholder MPA coordination. We intend to issue a request for proposals in the near future.

The MPA Center expects these websites to serve as great resources for MPA stakeholders who face a growing challenge in effectively tracking and engaging in the tremendous variety of MPA events in coastal regions throughout the U.S. The websites will provide

current information about the goals and objectives of planned MPAs, key public events, and ongoing reviews of environmental and management plan documents.

All of the regional websites will be linked to the national MPA website, <http://www.mpa.gov> to facilitate stakeholder access to information from all localities.

I encourage you to browse through <http://www.PacificMPA.org> to get a sense of the wealth of materials and updates provided on the site. If you would like more details about the MPA Center's plans for regional clearinghouses in 2003, please contact me at Joseph.Uravitch@noaa.gov.

U.S. Geological Survey to Map Richness of Aquatic Life in the Great Lakes

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and its cooperators are launching a 5-year study in the Great Lakes basin to identify and map unprotected areas of substantial richness in aquatic animal species, and to determine how free those habitats are from human disturbance. By locating the places that support a full range of aquatic species, scientists hope to help decision makers identify gaps and set priorities for conservation.

“Our goal is to keep common species common,” said Donna Myers, coordinator of the USGS Great Lakes Aquatic GAP Analysis Program. “GAP analysis grew out of the realization that a species-by-species approach to conservation does not address the continual loss and fragmentation of natural landscapes,” said Myers. “The most efficient way to protect animal species is to protect their habitats. But protection can’t be successfully accomplished until we know where these places are located,” Myers explained.

The Nature Conservancy estimates that the Great Lakes region supports more than 30 communities of plants and animals that are found nowhere else on Earth. The Great Lakes and their watersheds provide habitat for approximately 300 species of fish plus diverse numbers and types of freshwater mussels, crayfish, and aquatic insects. The rivers, streams, wetlands, and coastal areas of the Great Lakes system are key, because fish and other animal species depend on them for habitat. However, what we know about the aquatic biodiversity of this 200,000 square-mile region is incomplete. At the same time there are many threats to the aquatic biodiversity of the Great Lakes Region including invasive species, agricultural development, forestry, and urban expansion.

“Restoring and preserving the richness of species—the biodiversity—of the lands and waters of the region is an important activity because biodiversity in the Great Lakes is strongly tied to the economy, health, and quality of life of the surrounding human population through its positive effects on tourism, recreation, agriculture, drinking-water quality, and fish consumption,” said Myers.

The Great Lakes Aquatic GAP is one of the newest projects in the National GAP Program. USGS is cooperating with more than 200 other natural resource agencies in 49 of the 50 states across the nation. The Great Lakes Aquatic GAP project will provide maps, data, information, and scientific studies of basinwide, lakewide, and statewide patterns in aquatic biodiversity. The project will involve cooperative relationships with state, local, and nongovernmental agencies in developing and applying this information to state and regional conservation activities.

“The Departments of Natural Resources in the States of Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin have taken a strong interest in the project,” Myers said. “State-level studies, which are components of the entire project, will begin first in Michigan, Wisconsin, and New York, followed by Minnesota, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. A pilot state-level study is in its third year in Ohio.”

The USGS Great Lakes Science Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is leading the regional effort to combine data from all the Great Lakes states. Funding of just over \$5 million is planned for the effort from 2003 through 2008. More information can be obtained at the websites <http://www.gap.uidaho.edu> and <http://www.glsc.usgs.gov/GLGAP.htm>.

Editor’s Note: In the Great Lakes region, there are 15 national program sites, including a marine sanctuary, a national estuarine research reserve, wildlife refuges, and national parks, that are part of the draft of the national inventory of marine managed areas. For maps detailing topography, bathymetry, and political boundaries in the Great Lakes and in other U.S. coastal and marine regions, go to <http://mpa.gov/mpaservices/atlas/composites.html#Anchor-Federal-62>. State sites will be added to the inventory in 2003.

MPAs Introduction Course Under Development

In a recently completed MPA needs assessment, marine resource managers, fishing interests, environmental groups, and others stated that stakeholders need more information on the basic principles and issues surrounding MPAs.

To address this need, the National Marine Protected Areas Center’s Training and Technical Assistance Institute in Charleston, South Carolina, is developing a half-day training course that will cover fundamental MPA concepts, definitions, types, and uses. Designed to be politically neutral, the course will include overview information on the history of MPAs, the work of the National Marine Protected Areas Center, and current research on MPA effectiveness and design.

The Training and Technical Assistance Institute is developing the introduction to MPAs syllabus, outlining learning objectives, and designing training materials. A review committee representing a range of marine management entities has been assembled to

provide valuable input based upon the members' experience with various stakeholder groups.

The introduction to MPAs course will be piloted in spring 2003. The MPA Center anticipates that the training course may be presented at the request of a state or a policy group, as an educational offering at aquariums, or in conjunction with stakeholder meetings. Although MPA Center staff will initially teach the course, the program is being designed so that other partners can teach the material in the future.

For more information about the course, please contact Heidi Recksiek at the MPA Center's Training and Technical Assistance Institute: Heidi.Recksiek@noaa.gov. Go to <http://mpa.gov/mpabusiness/mpacenter/training.html> to learn more about the Training and Technical Assistance Institute.

Submerged Cultural Resources: Clues to Our Nation's History

Marine protected areas can encompass an area that has been set aside because of a ship, aircraft, or other cultural artifact that has come to rest on the sea floor. These submerged cultural artifacts are valuable ties to our past.

One of the most recent and famous cases of a submerged cultural resource is the USS Monitor, a civil war ship that sank in 1862 with its crew still aboard. The Monitor rests in deep waters off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and was the basis for the first National Marine Sanctuary established in 1975.

In recent years, researchers noted the fast deterioration of parts of the wreck, and the USS Monitor's gun turret, steam engine, and a significant portion of the hull were lifted out of the waters and sent to the Mariner's Museum in Newport News, Virginia, for study and preservation. Many interesting nuggets have resurfaced along with the Monitor's parts. Remains of two crew members were found, along with clothing, jewelry, silverware, and other everyday items. Scientists are still sifting through the remnants to better understand the circumstances surrounding the ship's destruction, as well as keys to other civil war battles that were fought off our coasts.

Although designated initially for its rich natural resources, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, off the coast of Massachusetts, is also known for its potential submerged cultural artifacts. These may include prehistoric materials, shipwrecks, disposal areas, and aircraft. Some fishermen in the area have pulled skeletal remains of mammoth and mastodons from these waters, leading researchers to believe that a wealth of insight to the nation's past might be contained here, including clues about the presence of Native Americans in the region.

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary today protects 842-square miles in an area geologists say was created some 14,000 years ago during the retreat of the last Ice Age

glaciers. The array of mammals that thrive in these protected waters include a variety of whales, the Atlantic white-sided dolphin, harbor porpoises, sea turtles, and harbor and gray seals. Atlantic bluefin tuna, Atlantic cod, winter flounder, sea scallops, and northern lobsters travel through Stellwagen, and forty species of birds make their home here at various points throughout the year.

The shipwrecks within the parameters of the Stellwagen Bank sanctuary were grounded by human error, hurricanes, or other storms. One of the most well known historic submerged wrecks, the recently discovered Portland, rests in deep water inside the Stellwagen Bank sanctuary. The ship was a 291-foot side-wheeled steamer. In November 1898, its 192 passengers and crew were returning home from Thanksgiving with loved ones when they were lost in what is now called the Portland Gale. The storm killed more than 200 people and wrecked or sank at least 140 major vessels. Today, abundant and colorful marine growth, including anemones, tunicates and sponges, cover much of the Portland; cod, redfish, and cusk swim about the wreck.

Another vessel, known as the Toy or Christmas Wreck, a former gunboat carrying a cargo of toys, was lost during the Portland Gale as well, and may lie on the southern end of Stellwagen Bank.

Because these ships are contained within a federal national marine sanctuary, there are regulations that prohibit moving, removing or injuring, or attempting to move, remove, or injure any submerged cultural or historical resources, including artifacts and pieces from shipwrecks. Violations carry civil penalties.

An unsolved mystery within Stellwagen Bank sanctuary is the identity of the remains of at least one aircraft. Reportedly, it's a P-38 Lightning, used during World War II, which crashed somewhere along the western edge of the sanctuary. No information is presently available to explain the reason for its appearance at this site nor are there current plans to research its significance.

The host of historical artifacts scattered throughout our oceans and Great Lakes is fundamental to understanding our heritage. We cannot unlock the clues to every artifact or even determine where they all now dwell. We can, however, continue to preserve, protect, and respect their significance as part of our nation's cultural legacy.

To learn more about submerged cultural resources within national marine sanctuaries, visit <http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/>. For more information about the MPA Center's work with submerged cultural resources, go to <http://mpa.gov>.

MPA Center and COMPASS Launch www.PacificMPA.org

Keeping track of the growing number of MPA planning processes in the Pacific just became a lot easier. The National MPA Center, working with the Communications

Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS), has developed an online clearinghouse, www.PacificMPA.org, that provides a single, straightforward and factual source for timely information about ongoing governmental MPA planning efforts from Washington state to California.

For each MPA process, the site provides up-to-date information on goals, possible outcomes, timelines, upcoming public meetings, draft environmental documents, links to the responsible agency programs, and agency points of contact. Updated regularly with input from over a dozen federal and state MPA agencies, this site gives all interested stakeholders the tools to track and effectively engage in MPA activity throughout the Pacific region. PacificMPA.org is the first of a network of regional clearinghouses that the MPA Center will establish with partners around the country.

For additional information about the PacificMPA.org web site, contact Sarah Lyons at sarah.lyons@noaa.gov. For information about the partnership with COMPASS, contact Dr. Charlie Wahle at charles.wahle@noaa.gov. To read more about the Science Institute, visit <http://mpa.gov/mpabusiness/mpacenter/science.html>.

Question of the Month:

Why is a national inventory of marine protected areas necessary?

As part of the Executive Order to develop a national network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and to establish the National Marine Protected Areas Center, a mandate was included to publish and maintain a list of MPAs. The National MPA Center has been charged with this task, and has been publishing completed data on www.mpa.gov.

Initially, the project was focused on meeting the MPA list requirement that was specifically outlined in the MPA Executive Order. Over time, however, the data collection team realized the complexity of the effort and the need to collect information about the broader universe of protected areas in the U.S. in order to establish the list. This information also is needed to conduct the scientific analysis necessary to define the national MPA system as well as measure the effectiveness of existing sites that will be a part of it. To ensure a more inclusive listing, the inventory team proposed including all federal, state, local, and tribal sites, and identified them as marine managed areas (MMAs).

The national inventory provides useful data to local, tribal, state and federal managers, scientists, conservation organizations, industry and user groups, other stakeholders, the media, academia, and international organizations concerned with regional and global conservation.

The inventory database has three main benefits:

1. It increases information exchange.
2. It aids in natural and cultural resource management decisions.

3. It provides strong analytical assistance to resource managers, stakeholders, and academia.

In addition, the inventory provides a consistent, accessible and searchable information base. It promotes a better understanding of the distribution, condition, and effectiveness of existing MPAs, and raises awareness of MPA sites at a local, regional, and national level.

To learn more about the national inventory, check out http://mpa.gov/mpaservices/mpa_inventory.html.

Upcoming Events and Conferences

January 2003

6-9: Coastal Geotools Conference, Charleston, SC. The goal is to promote understanding and applied uses of geospatial data and tools for studying and effectively managing the coast: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/GeoTools>

27-31: Southeast Coastal Ocean Science Conference and Workshop, Charleston, SC. Scientists, resource managers, and others are invited to attend this gathering to discuss science and management issues in the South Atlantic Bight. This region of the U.S. Atlantic coast extends from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina to West Palm Beach, Florida. <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/secos>

February 2003

23 - 26: RecFish II, St. Pete Beach, FL: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/RecFishII.html>
NOAA Fisheries announces RecFish II, a symposium for marine recreational fishermen and others interested to deliberate the evolving use of marine protected areas. Organized jointly with Sea Grant and the National Marine Protected Areas Center, RecFish II will bring together diverse segments of the marine recreational fishing community for a focused dialogue on MPA planning and implementation. The goal will be to produce a formal document highlighting the views and inputs of attendees, including recommendations on efficacy and equity issues. These will then be made available to marine fisheries managers, policy makers, and related advisory groups actively involved in various MPA processes.

April 2003

14 - 18: George Wright Society Biennial Conference, Protecting Our Diverse Heritage: The Role of Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites, San Diego, CA: <http://www.georgewright.org/2003.html>

May 2003

11 - 16: The Fifth Annual Science and Management of Protected Areas Association (SAMPAA) Conference, Victoria, British Columbia:

http://www.sampaa.org/sampaa_conference.htm

July 2003

13-17: Coastal Zone '03, held in Baltimore, Maryland. Theme is coastal zone management through time: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cz2003>

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