

BUILDING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

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www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov

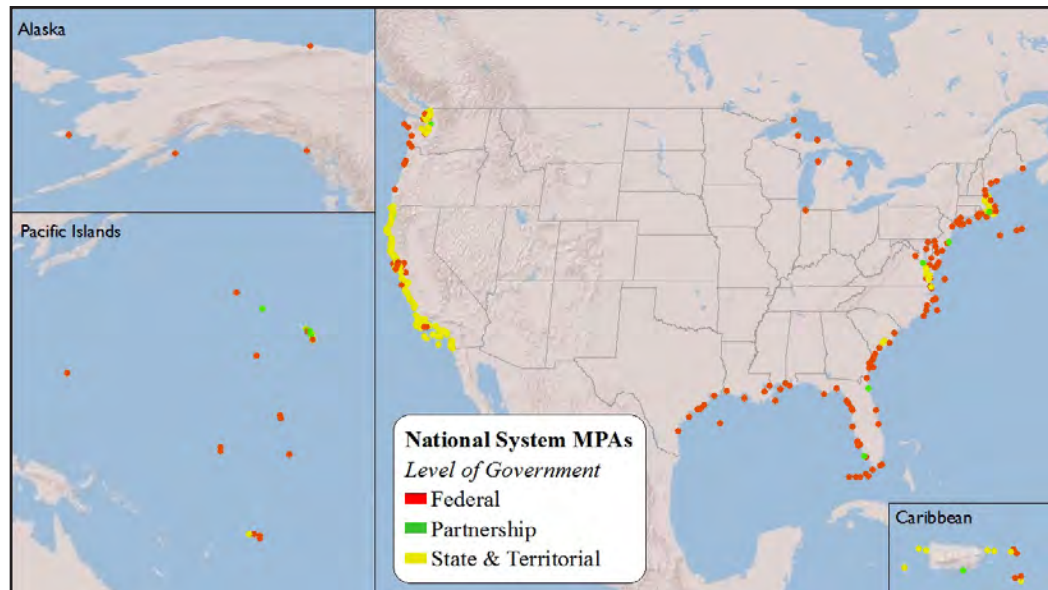
The information provided here is for the 437 MPAs that are members of the national system of MPAs. Information is current as of July 2013. The national system will expand as federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local agencies nominate additional sites. Additional information on these sites can be found on the List of National System MPAs, available at www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov.

THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

In 2009, the United States established the National System of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), a partnership of the nation's MPA programs to more effectively conserve the nation's marine resources. The national system currently includes 437 federal, state and territorial MPAs managed by diverse agencies that are working toward national conservation objectives. The system benefits the nation's collective conservation efforts as well as participating MPA management agencies, providing them with a forum to exchange ideas and address common issues affecting multiple sites. The national system is described in detail in the *Framework for the National System of Marine Protected Areas of the United States of America*.

Key benefits of the national system include:

- Enhancing MPA stewardship
- Building partnerships
- Expanding MPA capacity
- Increasing support for marine conservation
- More effective outreach on MPAs
- Promoting cultural heritage
- Protecting MPA resources



NATIONAL SYSTEM MPAs AT A GLANCE:

- The national system contains 437 sites and covers an area of 191,030 square miles
- 4% of U.S. waters (0-200 nautical miles) is covered by the national system MPAs
- About 77% of the total area of all national system MPAs is no take, primarily due to the large, highly protected Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.
- All 21 of the national system's priority conservation objectives are addressed by national system MPAs
- Every major ecoregion in the U.S. is represented to some extent in the national system

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



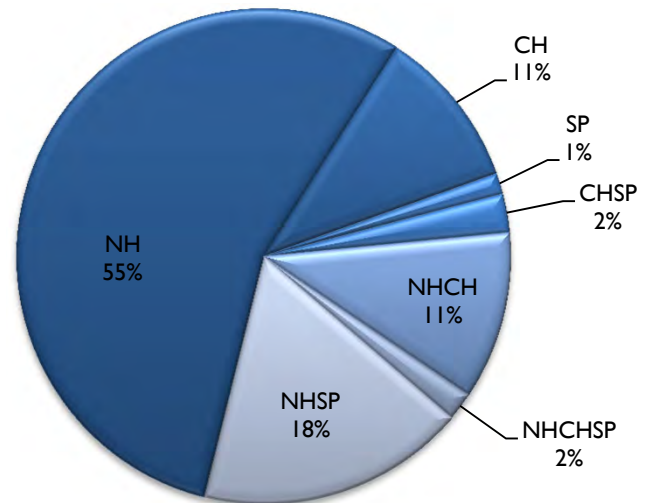
IN FOCUS: NATIONAL SYSTEM GOALS

The goals of the national system are to conserve and manage:

- **Natural heritage** – the nation’s biological communities, habitats, ecosystems, and processes and the ecological services, values and uses they provide
- **Cultural heritage** – cultural resources that reflect the nation’s maritime history and traditional cultural connections to the sea, as well as the uses and values they provide
- **Sustainable production** – the nation’s renewable living resources and their habitats (including, but not limited to, spawning, mating, and nursery grounds and areas established to minimize bycatch of species) and the social, cultural and economic values and services they provide

Most (83%) of the national system MPAs have a primary conservation focus on conserving natural heritage. Approximately 14% of MPAs have a primary conservation focus on conserving cultural resources, and 3% are primarily focused on sustainable production. About one-third (33%) of all the national system MPAs have more than one conservation focus.

NUMBER OF MPAs BY CONSERVATION FOCUS



NH = Natural Heritage



CH = Cultural Heritage

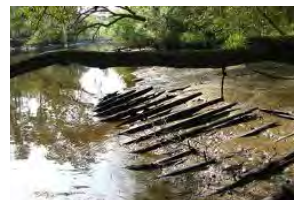


SP = Sustainable Production



Natural Heritage Focus: Año Nuevo State Park (CA)

Año Nuevo State Park in Central California is the site of the largest mainland breeding colony in the world for the northern elephant seal. Each year, thousands of visitors experience walks guided by park staff during the seal mating and breeding season. The park protects and interprets these pinniped rookeries, as well as other significant wildlife habitats on Año Nuevo Island and the mainland. It contains sensitive native dunes and coastal terrace prairie habitats, and a diversity of inland plant communities, including old growth forest and freshwater marsh. Its four perennial streams support steelhead trout and coho salmon, and its wetlands are habitat to the rare San Francisco garter snake and red-legged frog. Año Nuevo State Park is managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation.



Cultural Heritage Focus: Ashley River Heritage Canoe Trail (SC)

On South Carolina’s tidal Ashley River, the South Carolina Institute of Archeology and Anthropology has established a six-mile canoe trail to highlight shipwrecks and other archeological resources of the area. Beginning at Old Dorchester State Park, and ending at Middleton Place, a national historic landmark and historic garden in Charleston, the trail provides paddlers with an opportunity to see the historical sites and multiple shipwrecks that tell stories of the settlement and early industry of the Charleston area.



Sustainable Production Focus: Norfolk Canyon (Mid-Atlantic)

Norfolk Canyon, off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, is one of many canyons along the East Coast that link the continental shelf with the deep sea, providing unique habitats and pathways for nutrients and sediments. It is also one of four canyons in the Mid-Atlantic region managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service in cooperation with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The four canyons are closed to bottom trawling under the Tilefish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to protect 113,000 acres of deep sea corals, sponges, and clay outcroppings. Tilefish are shelter-seeking, and create complex burrows in clay outcrops in underwater canyons. Their burrowing habitats can significantly alter the topography of the continental shelf off the East Coast of the U.S.

PRIORITY CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

All 21 of the national system's priority conservation objectives (see Framework document on www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov for complete list) are addressed by member MPAs. The majority of sites (389 or 89%) meet at least one natural heritage priority conservation objective. Approximately 276 MPAs (63%) meet at least one sustainable production priority conservation objective, while 159 MPAs (36%) meet at least one cultural heritage priority conservation objective.

Top Five Priority Conservation Objectives Addressed by National System MPAs:

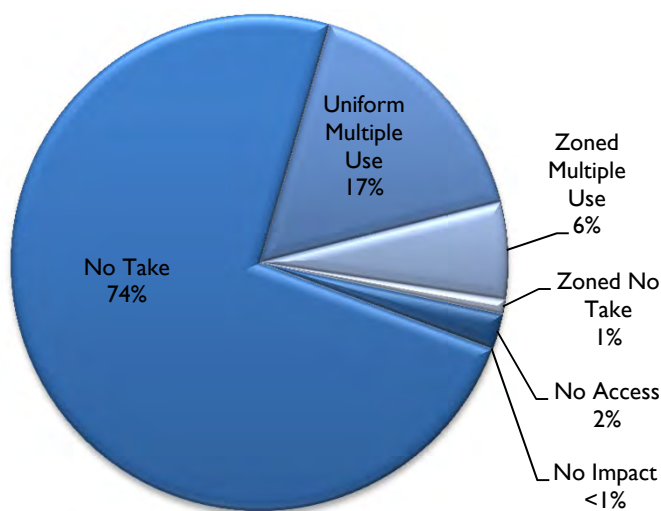
Natural Heritage

- Areas of high species and/or habitat diversity (326)
- Key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research (322)
- Unique or rare species, habitats and associated communities (278)
- Key reproduction areas and nursery grounds (259)
- Key biogenic habitats (256)

LEVEL OF PROTECTION

Unlike the total area of all U.S. MPAs, which are primarily multiple use, the majority (77%) of the total area of the national system is considered no-take and prohibits the extraction or significant destruction of natural and cultural resources. This is because of the large size of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, a no-take site covering approximately 140,000 square miles. This single MPA makes up 95% of the no-take area in the national system. Excluding the Monument, no take areas make up 3.7% of the total area of national system MPAs. About 18% of the area of the national system is either uniform or zoned multiple use sites that allow a variety of human activities, including fishing and other extractive uses.

PERCENT OF AREA BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION

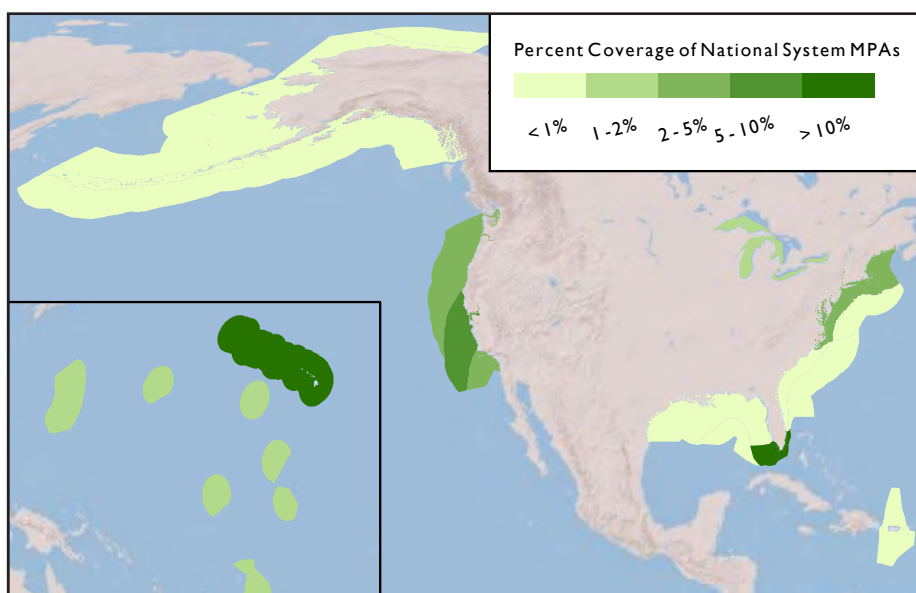


SITES BY CEC MARINE ECOREGIONS

The National System of MPAs is charged with representing the diverse marine ecosystems of the U.S. One way to assess how well it is meeting that goal is to analyze how much of each ecoregion in U.S. waters is in a national system MPA. Created by the Commission

for Environmental Cooperation, (CEC), the Marine Ecoregions of North America classifies marine ecoregions according to oceanographic features and geographically distinct assemblages of species from the Beaufort Sea to the Gulf of Mexico, covering the continent's territorial waters in the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. The largest number (103 or 24%) of national system sites are located within the Montereyan Pacific Transition marine ecoregion, which stretches along the central California coast from Point Conception to Cape Mendocino. When measured according to the area covered by an MPA, the best represented ecoregion is the Hawaiian Archipelago, which has 74% of its area in a national system MPA, the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

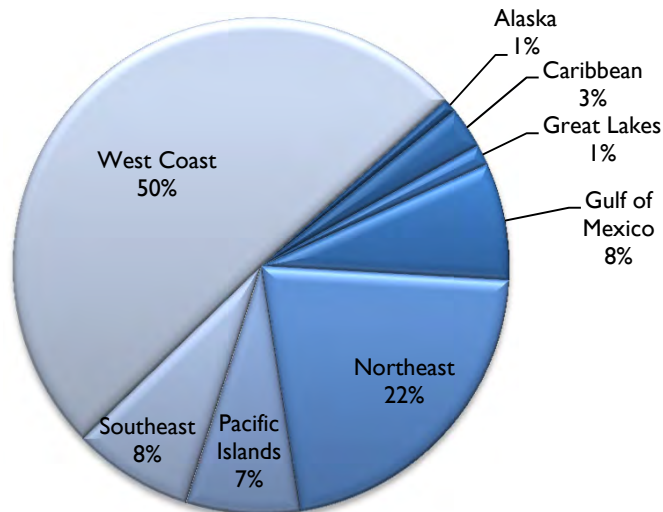
PERCENT OF ECOREGION AREA WITH NATIONAL SYSTEM MPAS



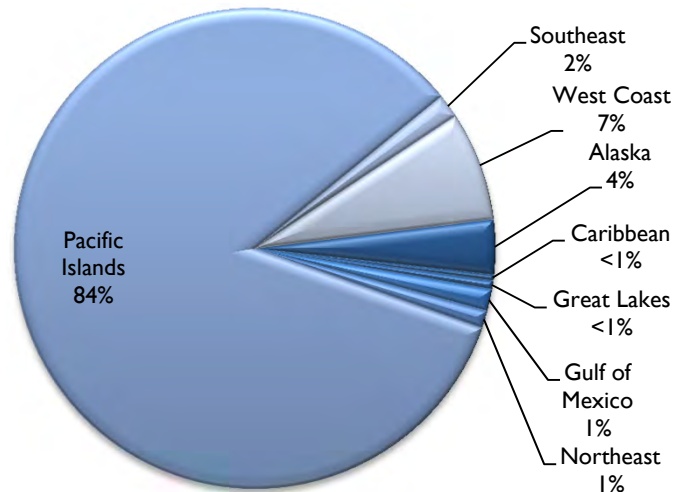
REGIONS AND LOCATIONS

California has the highest number of MPAs in the national system. The Pacific Islands region has the largest area of MPAs in the national system, due to the size of the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument in Hawaii, which extends over 140,420 square miles. In contrast, there are 195 MPAs (45%) in the national system that cover less than one square mile of marine area each. In all, 30 states and territories are represented in the national system, plus additional offshore areas under federal jurisdiction.

PERCENT OF NATIONAL SYSTEM MPAs BY REGION



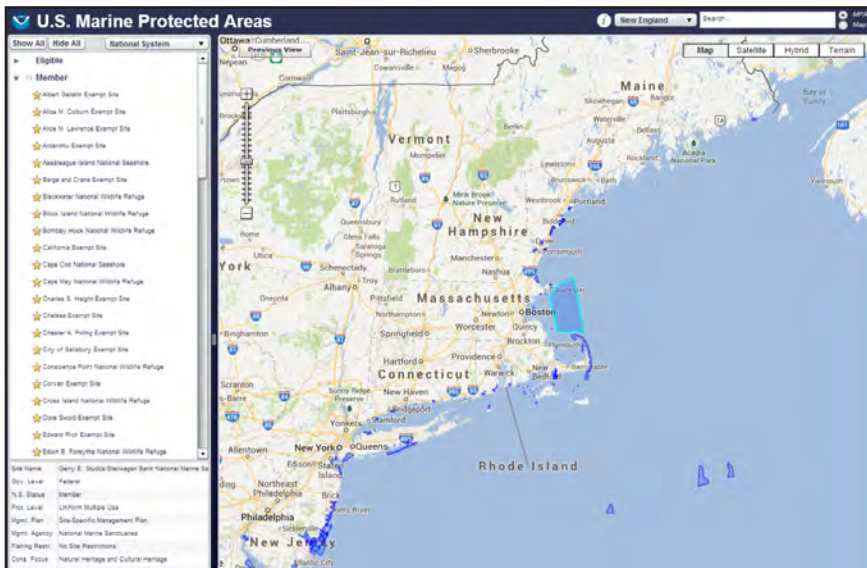
PERCENT OF NATIONAL SYSTEM MPA AREA BY REGION



PROGRAMS

Of the 437 national system MPAs, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife manages 141 MPAs (32%). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages 107 MPAs (25%). The National Park Service manages 34 national system MPAs, or 8%. There are 13 (3%) National Marine Sanctuaries and five (1%) National Estuarine Research Reserve MPAs included in the system. Altogether, 36% of the national system MPAs are managed by federal agencies, while 61% are managed by state or territorial agencies. The remainder are managed by federal/state partnerships.

WHERE CAN I FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?



The National Marine Protected Areas Center's Interactive MPA Mapping Tool allows users to view boundaries and access data for more than 1,700 MPAs in the United States. The tool provides an interface to explore MPA information that was previously limited to expert geographic information system users. The site has easy-to-use functions to visualize MPA boundaries, review MPA classification information (e.g., level of protection, managing agency, fishing restrictions), and explore all MPAs in a given location.

www.marineprotectedareas.noaa.gov

The National Marine Protected Areas Center is located within NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and works with the Department of Interior to serve as a resource to all federal, state, territorial and tribal programs responsible for the health of the nation's oceans.

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