

Sanctuary Nomination Process

Summer 2014

For the first time in twenty years, NOAA has re-established a process for the public to nominate nationally significant marine and Great Lakes areas as potential new national marine sanctuaries. This community-based process addresses a growing number of requests for new national marine sanctuaries from diverse interests around the country.

This action will help fulfill NOAA's mandate under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to identify marine areas of special national significance and supports the administration's goals of ensuring healthy coastal communities and economies. The agency received nearly 18,000 comments on the June 2013 proposal, the vast majority of which were in strong support. NOAA is not designating any new national marine sanctuaries with this action, a step towards addressing the growing number of requests for new national marine sanctuaries from a variety of interested constituents from around the country.

The Next Steps

NOAA's website (www.nominate.noaa.gov) describes the nomination process, including the list of criteria and considerations that NOAA will use to evaluate nominations. NOAA expects the review process for each incoming nomination to take approximately three to six months. After each review is complete, successfully nominated sites will be placed in an inventory of areas NOAA could consider for national marine sanctuary designation.

Once an area is placed in the inventory, NOAA may consider beginning the separate multi-year, highly participatory designation process for that area. The national marine sanctuary designation process is described in the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Being in the inventory does not guarantee that NOAA will designate that area as a national marine sanctuary in the future, and it does not establish any regulations or limit activities in the area.

Typically, marine sanctuary designations take three to five years. The designation process depends on a range of factors, including the complexity of the area, the proposed regulations, the level of support from current user groups, and agency resources.

Anticipated Benefits

Across national marine sanctuaries, NOAA economists estimate about \$6 billion annually is generated in local coastal and ocean-dependent economies from diverse activities like commercial fishing, research, and recreation-tourist activities.



Photo: Ari Friedlaender

Sanctuary designations provide many diverse benefits for coastal communities including the opportunity for the protection of nationally significant marine and cultural resources; social and economic benefits; increased opportunities for management, research, and education; and community engagement.

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Questions & Answers

Why is NOAA re-establishing a process to nominate new sites now?

NOAA is re-establishing the process in response to numerous requests from communities and stakeholders, political leaders, and other interests from across the country. These requests often reference the many and diverse benefits communities realize from a national marine sanctuary. This action also fulfills NOAA's mandate under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act to identify marine and Great Lakes areas of special national significance and supports NOAA's goals of ensuring healthy coastal communities and economies.

How do I nominate a new site? What types of information do I need to provide?

Once the final rule is published in the Federal Register establishing the Sanctuary Nomination Process, it will provide more information on the community-based sanctuary nomination process, including what to include in a nomination. NOAA will also have more information once the rule is published on the Sanctuary Nomination Process website (www.nominate.noaa.gov) which will include a guide to help prepare a nomination.

When should I submit a nomination?

A nomination should be submitted when a community believes that a marine or Great Lakes area meets the national significance criteria and management considerations, and would benefit from becoming a national marine sanctuary.

Is there a nomination deadline?

There are no deadlines for submissions. Nominations will be reviewed as they are received by NOAA.

How will the nomination process affect uses of the marine environment?

Re-establishing the sanctuary nomination process conveys no direct regulatory protections, nor does it establish any new national marine sanctuaries. NOAA would implement regulations only after a nominated area has gone through the sanctuary designation process, a separate activity that is highly public and participatory and typically takes years to complete.

Where can I find more information about NOAA's sanctuary system?

More information about NOAA's national marine sanctuary system can be found at: sanctuaries.noaa.gov

Whom do I contact with questions?

For general questions regarding the sanctuary nomination process, please contact NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: sanctuary.nominations@noaa.gov

