Analysis of National System MPAs
March 2012

www.mpa.gov

The information provided here is for the 355 MPAs that are members of the national system of MPAs. Information is current as of March 2012. 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.mpa.gov.

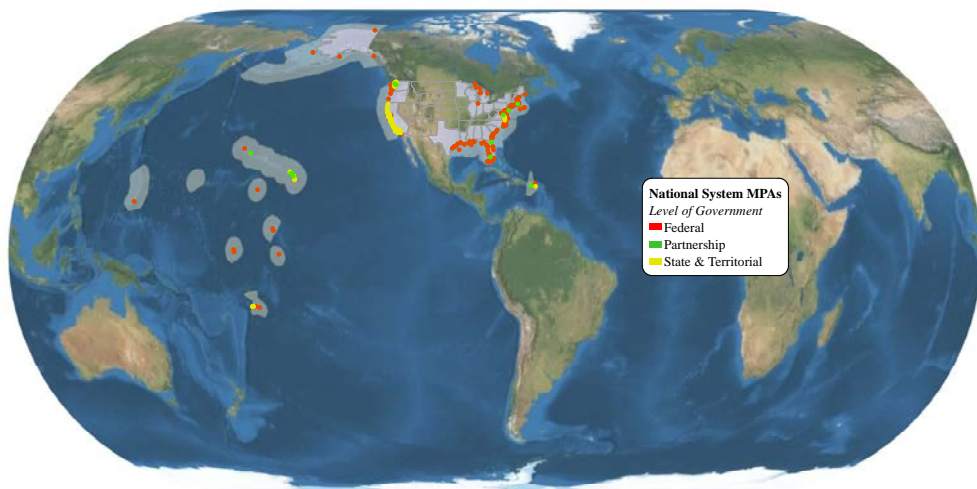### The National System of Marine Protected Areas

In 2009, the United States established the National System of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), a partnership of the nation's MPA programs to facilitate more effective MPA management for the conservation of the nation's marine resources. The national system currently includes 355 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 MPAs, providing them with a means to address issues that extend beyond their boundaries.

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

- Building MPA capacity

- Increasing support for marine conservation

- More effective outreach on MPAs

- Promoting cultural heritage

- Protecting MPA resources

National System MPAs
Level of Government
- Federal
- Partnership
- State & Territorial

National System Sites at a Glance:

- The national system contains 355 sites and covers an area of 177,033 square miles

- 4% of U.S. waters (0-200 nautical miles) is covered by the national system sites

- About 83% of the total area of all national system sites is considered no-take, due to the large, highly protected Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument

- All 21 of the national system's priority conservation objectives are addressed by national system members

- Every major ecoregion in the U.S. is represented in the national system

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.

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IN FOCUS: NATIONAL SYSTEM GOALS

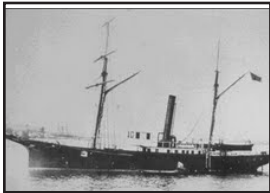The goals of the national system are to conserve and manage:

- **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

MEMBER MPA STORIES

Natural Heritage Focus: Tres Palmas de Rincón Marine Reserve (PR)
Tres Palmas Marine Reserve, located in western Puerto Rico, was designated as a no-take reserve in 2004 as a result of a collaborative process between community groups and government agencies. The area is a well-know surfing hotspot and is home a variety of fish, invertebrates, sea turtles and corals including the threatened Elkhorn coral. Tres Palmas Marine Reserve is managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources.

Cultural Heritage Focus: Albert Gallatin Exempt Site (MA)
The Albert Gallatin was considered one of the United States Revenue Cutter Service's most able seagoing vessels. On January 6, 1892, after the vessel left Kittery Maine enroute to Provincetown, Massachusetts, it encountered worsening weather. That day, on Boo Hoo ledge near Manchester, Massachusetts, the Albert Gallatin grounded, broke in two and completely submerged. The Massachusetts Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources (BUAR) is the sole trustee of Massachusetts's underwater heritage, including this shipwreck site. The BUAR promotes and protects the public's interests in these resources for recreational, economic, environmental, and historical purposes.
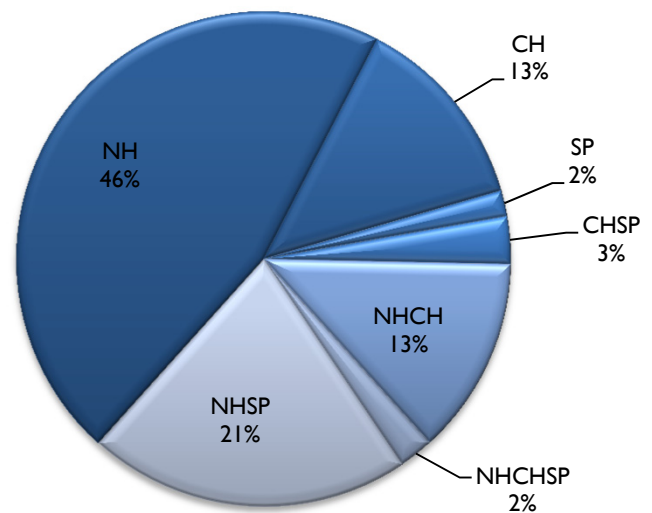
Sustainable Production Focus: Amanave Village Marine Protected Area (AS)
Amanave Village Marine Protected Area is located off the western tip of Tutuila, the main island of American Samoa. The area is co-managed by the local village and the Department of Marine & Wildlife Resources in order to improve inshore fishery resources and enhance stewardship of marine resources. The Amanave Village MPA was established in 2009 and is a hotspot for coral cover and for fish biomass and richness.

CONSERVATION FOCUS

Most (80%) of the national system sites have a primary conservation focus on conserving natural heritage. Approximately 17% of sites have a primary conservation focus on conserving cultural resources, and 4% of sites are primarily focused on sustainable production. More than one-third (39%) of all the national system sites have more than one conservation focus.

NH = Natural Heritage   CH = Cultural Heritage   SP = Sustainable Production

NUMBER OF SITES BY CONSERVATION FOCUS

- NH 46%
- CH 13%
- SP 2%
- CHSP 3%
- NHCH 13%
- NHHCHSP 2%
- NHSP 21%

PRIORITY CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

All 21 of the national system's priority conservation objectives (see Framework document on www.mpa.gov for complete list) are addressed by member sites. The majority of sites (307 or 87%) meet at least one natural heritage priority conservation objective. Approximately 196 sites (55%) meet at least one sustainable production priority conservation objective, while 135 sites (38%) meet at least one cultural heritage priority conservation objective.

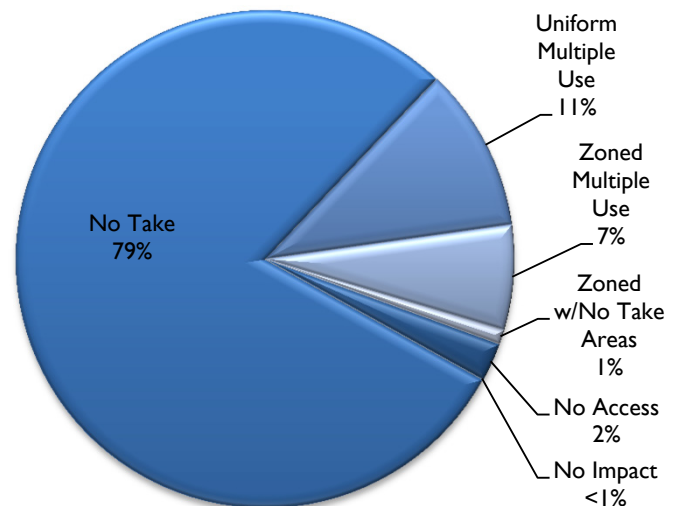> **Top Five Priority Conservation Objectives Addressed by Member Sites:**
> <u>Natural Heritage</u>
>
> - Areas of high species and/or high diversity (255)
>
> - Key areas that provide compatible opportunities for education and research (250)
>
> - Key reproduction areas and nursery grounds (219)
>
> - Key biogenic habitats (210)
>
> - Unique or rare species, habitats and associated communities (208)

LEVEL OF PROTECTION

The majority (83%) of the total area of the national system is considered no-take and prohibits the extraction or significant destruction of natural and cultural resources. In contrast, 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. Papahanaumokuakea Marine National Monument in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, a no-take site covering approximately 140,000 square miles, makes up nearly all of the no-take area in the national system. Less than 1% of U.S. waters overall are no-take.

PERCENT OF AREA BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION

- No Take 79%
- Uniform Multiple Use 11%
- Zoned Multiple Use 7%
- Zoned w/No Take Areas 1%
- No Access 2%
- No Impact <1%
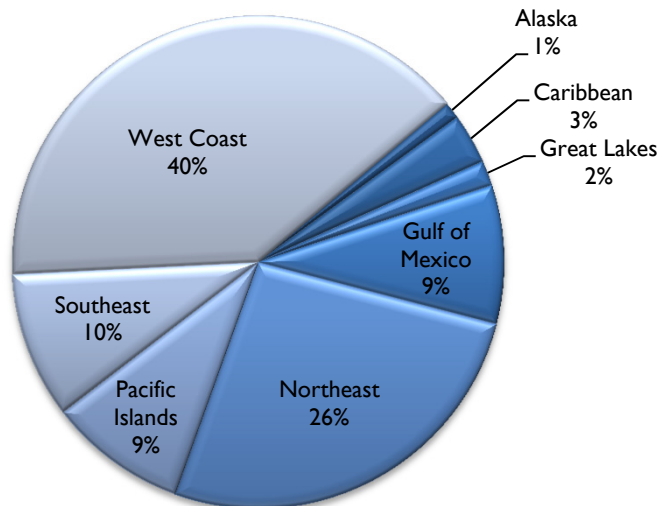
SITES BY CEC MARINE ECOREGIONS

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 (88 or 25%) 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. However, the second highest number (76, or 21%) of national system sites are found in the Virginian Atlantic marine ecoregion. Only one national system MPA is found in the Aleutian Archipelago marine ecoregion.
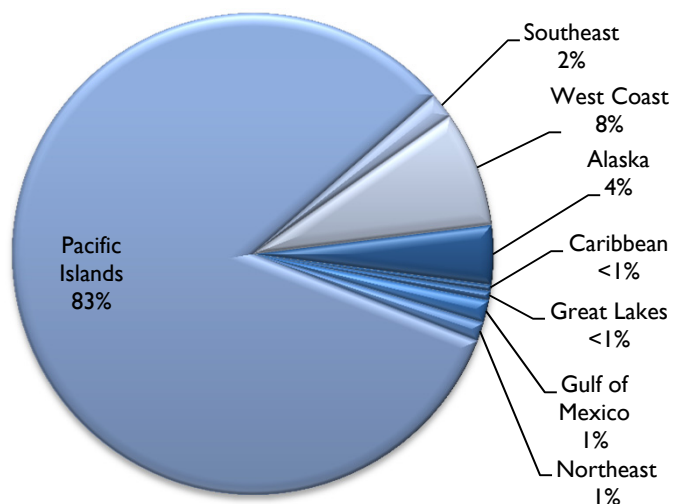
REGIONS AND LOCATIONS

The west coast (California in particular), has the highest number of sites in the national system. The Pacific Islands region has the largest area of sites in the national system, due to the size of the Papahanaumokuakea National Marine Monument in Hawaii, which extends over 140,420 square miles. In contrast, there are 167 sites (47%) in the national system that cover less than 1 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 SITES BY REGION

Alaska 1%
Caribbean 3%
Great Lakes 2%
West Coast 40%
Gulf of Mexico 9%
Southeast 10%
Pacific Islands 9%
Northeast 26%

PERCENT OF AREA BY REGION

Southeast 2%
West Coast 8%
Alaska 4%
Caribbean <1%
Great Lakes <1%
Gulf of Mexico 1%
Northeast 1%
Pacific Islands 83%

PROGRAMS

Of the 355 national system sites, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages 107 sites (30%). The National Park Service manages 32 national system sites, or 9%. There are 14 (4%) National Marine Sanctuaries and five (1%) National Estuarine Research Reserve Sites included in the system. Altogether, 44% of the national system sites are managed by federal agencies, while 48% are managed by state agencies. The remainder are managed by federal/state partnerships or territories.

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 1,600 marine protected areas (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.

The MPA Center's interactive MPA mapping tool, available at www.mpa.gov, allows users to view boundaries and access data for more than 1,600 MPAs in the U.S., including all national system sites.

www.mpa.gov

Lauren Wenzel
Acting Director, National MPA Center
Lauren.Wenzel@noaa.gov
(301) 563-1136

Dr. Mimi D'Iorio
GIS/Database Manager
Mimi.Diorio@noaa.gov
(831) 645-2703

Kara Yeager
Communications Coordinator
Kara.Yeager@noaa.gov
(301) 563-1162