



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

NOAA seeks public input on nomination process for potential new marine sanctuaries

June 28, 2013

NOAA is seeking public input on a proposed process and associated criteria to evaluate potential new national marine sanctuaries in the nation's marine and Great Lakes environments.

NOAA will finalize the proposed process and criteria upon receiving public comment. NOAA will then consider whether to begin accepting nominations for new sanctuaries.

The National Marine Sanctuaries Act in 1972 gave NOAA a mandate to identify, designate, and protect marine areas of special national significance. The public's involvement in shaping the mechanisms used to nominate new sanctuaries will help NOAA in this mission.

"National marine sanctuaries support local economies by ensuring a healthy and productive ocean," said Holly A. Bamford, Ph.D., assistant NOAA administrator for the National Ocean Service. "Our goal is to establish a process communities can use to recommend areas of the marine environment that could benefit from designation as a sanctuary, and we're asking the public to tell us what they think that criteria should be."

In 1995, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries deactivated the previous process for nominating national marine sanctuaries. Since that time members of Congress, state officials, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and others have expressed interest in pursuing new national marine sanctuaries.

Reestablishing the nomination process will not affect the public's current use of the marine environment. NOAA may implement regulations only when an area is designated as a national marine sanctuary – a process that is highly public and participatory and typically takes years to complete.

Comments can be submitted electronically via the Federal eRulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov>. Under Keyword or ID, type in NOAA-NOS-2013-0091. Click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields and enter or attach your comments. To read the full Federal Register notice, visit:

<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

All comments must be received by August 27.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas, encompassing more than 170,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes waters. Through active research, management, and public engagement, national marine sanctuaries sustain healthy environments that are the foundation for thriving communities and stable economies.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun,



A humpback whale feeds in Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary.

[Download image here](#). (Credit: NOAA)



Pink coral at Rose Atoll in National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa.

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Diver explores bow of E.B. Allen in Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

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