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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## ***Designation Could Boost CNY Economy and Increase Recreational Use of Lake Ontario Waters -***

### **Four Lake Ontario Counties Join Together to Submit Application for National Marine Sanctuary**

SYRACUSE – Representatives of four Lake Ontario counties announced today that they are pursuing a nomination to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to nominate southeastern Lake Ontario as a National Marine Sanctuary (NMS).

The announcement was made at the Lakes of NY exhibit at the New York State Fair by representatives of Oswego, Jefferson, Cayuga and Wayne counties and the City of Oswego. National marine sanctuaries are designated by the federal government and are intended to increase responsible visitation and use of unique resources by visitors, anglers, divers, scientists, researchers, historians and educators.

“Southeastern Lake Ontario is eligible for consideration due to the age, type and preserved state of numerous historic shipwrecks and many other features,” said Oswego County Administrator Phil Church. “Our goal in seeking an NMS designation is to establish international recognition for the unique features of the region and increase economic, recreational, scientific research and educational activities.”

Church emphasized that “the term ‘sanctuary’ does not mean an off-limits preserve. In this instance it means just the opposite- to promote and increase visitation, understanding and appreciation of a unique area without interfering with its commercial and recreational activities.”

Officials from the four counties, the City of Oswego, state and federal representatives, and other agencies are working together to develop the Great Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary proposal. The application is based on a similar Great Lakes model, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Alpena, Michigan, where there have been significant economic benefits to the region.

It’s estimated that Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary on Lake Huron annually generates in excess of \$100 million to the regional economy and supports over 1,500 jobs. The visitor center for

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary is a major tourism destination for the region, hosting approximately 60,000 visitors annually.

“I commend the leaders of Jefferson, Oswego, Cayuga and Wayne counties for this effort to protect our important coastal waters,” said Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, 21<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. “Tourism is vital to the economy of upstate New York and this important project would help protect and promote the vast resources that lie beneath these waters.”

“Congratulations to all the partners involved in this historic regional project,” said Congressman Richard Hanna, 22<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District. “It is admirable to preserve and protect our rich cultural resources and to do so in a way that promotes and encourages tourism and other regional activities. I look forward to supporting this application to NOAA for consideration as a National Marine Sanctuary for our region.

“The region that borders Lake Ontario is a special place—and not just because of what’s on land, but also because of what’s beneath this Great Lake too,” said State Senator Patty Ritchie, 48<sup>th</sup> District. “Through this partnership, we can capitalize on this tremendous natural resource and everything that lies beneath its surface. By becoming a National Marine Sanctuary, our region has the potential to increase tourism, foster business and job growth, boost our economy and improve our region as a whole.”

Assemblyman Robert Oaks, 130<sup>th</sup> District, said, “the National Marine Sanctuary designation for our region would create a path toward preserving our Lake Ontario history and strengthening tourism opportunities for both local residents and visitors alike.”

“This designation as a National Marine Sanctuary will help businesses, and showcase our area’s natural attributes and attractions for visitors for years to come,” said Assemblyman Will Barclay, 120<sup>th</sup> Assembly District. “We already know our region is attractive and Lake Ontario has some of the best freshwater sandy beaches and sunsets in the world, along with rich historical landmarks. This designation is a great opportunity to help others outside the region learn that too and help draw more tourists. Our fishing and boating opportunities are plentiful and obtaining such a designation will be a great attraction for Oswego County and the region.”

“This is a grass-roots initiative with a huge potential to transform our region,” said Oswego County Legislature Chairman Kevin Gardner. “Benefits to local communities could include new jobs, economic gains through new investments in diving and angling charters, tour operations, interpretive centers and museums, increased visitation to local businesses, and research opportunities for colleges and secondary schools.”

The sanctuary could include Lake Ontario waters from the western boundary of Wayne County to the international border in Lake Ontario and east to Cape Vincent in Jefferson County. NOAA would determine the boundaries during the review process, which will involve extensive public participation. If approved by NOAA, the Great Lake Ontario NMS would be part of a collection of a very few spectacular natural settings in the U.S. stretching from the Olympic Coast of Washington State, to Lake Huron, Stellwagen Bank in Maine, the Florida Keys, and American Samoa in Hawaii.

Carolyn D. Fitzpatrick, chairwoman of the Jefferson County Board of Legislators, said the proposal is “such a wonderful undertaking/project for Jefferson County and our neighboring counties and city along the shores of Great Lake Ontario. While protecting the history of the underwaters, we will be offering great educational and tourism opportunities!”

“We are very pleased to be linking up with our county and city neighbors to the south and west of us along the shoreline of Lake Ontario for this important new initiative,” commented Robert Hagemann, County Administrator, Jefferson County. “Once our joint application through NOAA has been secured we look forward to expanding our horizons with the attraction of an expanded underwater exploration industry that promises to be as successful -- if not more so -- than the program that we have been studying along the Lake Huron shores of Alpena-Thunder Bay, Michigan.”

“Wayne County is proud to join with Cayuga, Oswego and Jefferson Counties in this cooperative initiative. Becoming a part of the National Marine Sanctuary system will help us guarantee that such national treasures as the St. Peter will be preserved and protected,” said Steve LeRoy, Vice Chairman of the Wayne County Board of Supervisors. “This 135-foot coal laden schooner was lost in a winter blizzard in 1898 and came to rest in 117 feet of water off the hamlet of Pultneyville in Wayne County. The wreck, its artifacts and the story that goes with it, are stellar examples of Lake Ontario’s unique maritime history. The number one tourist attraction in Wayne County is our historical lighthouse museum located in Sodus Point. Rich with Lake Ontario’s nautical past, it is visited by thousands each year. Receiving the Great Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary designation will help to ensure that our region’s greatest natural and cultural resource is safeguarded for generations to come. Wayne County enthusiastically joins with the other counties to support this important endeavor!”

“This designation would ensure protection of our waters and pieces of our history,” said Michael H. Chapman, Chairman of the Cayuga County Legislature. “Cayuga County supports the nomination and we look forward to working with our neighboring counties on this regional partnership.”

“This initiative will surely help our other efforts to ensure that tourism continues as an important part of the small business community,” said Oswego County Legislator Morris Sorbello, Granby, chairman of the Legislature’s Economic Development and Planning Committee.

“As the site of the Great Lake Ontario Marine Sanctuary, the City of Oswego welcomes visitors to experience the beauty and history of Oswego,” stated Oswego Mayor Thomas W. Gillen. “Said to be the home of America’s oldest freshwater port, Oswego has been the focus of military conflict and conquest, a site of record trade revenue, and a significant part in the history of American expansion, industrialism and shipping. Countless shipwrecks still rest in the deep cold waters of Lake Ontario and offer an incredible opportunity for historical and recreational diving as well as fishing and boating. The formation of a tourism economy based around shipwreck history and diving would positively impact not only the city, but our entire region. This opportunity is compelling and we are excited to support and embrace this regional initiative.”

“NOAA’s commitment to these National Marine Sanctuaries provides the basis for not only healthy ecosystems, but also thriving recreation, tourism and commercial activities that drive coastal economies through investment in visitor centers and collaborations with local organizations and stakeholders,” said Jean B. Gleisner, program manager for the CNY Regional Planning and Development Board. “As a region, we are extremely fortunate to have an opportunity to submit a nomination to NOAA for designation of Lake Ontario as a National Maritime Heritage Sanctuary. If we work together in

support of this initiative, it will bring unprecedented growth in economic opportunity that is founded on preservation and conservation of our region's significant collection of natural and cultural resources."

"Oswego Harbor, the oldest freshwater port in the United States, is the epicenter of Lake Ontario's marine roots," said Mercedes Niess, Executive Director, H. Lee White Maritime Museum at Oswego. "As a center for discovery, trade, warfare, innovation and commerce the southeastern shores of Lake Ontario played a pivotal role in the making of modern America. The submerged cultural resources contained within those waters serve as a living testament to our combined regional maritime history, heritage and culture. An NMS designation will allow for the preservation, protection, education and access to these truly nationally significant, largely untapped, resources."

Public meetings will be held across the four counties during September and October to gather input from Lake Ontario fishing charters, marinas and other waterfront businesses, waterfront property owners, environmental groups, elected officials and other stakeholder groups. Additional information about the Great Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary application is available at [www.lakeontarionms.com](http://www.lakeontarionms.com). Information about National Marine Sanctuaries is available at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

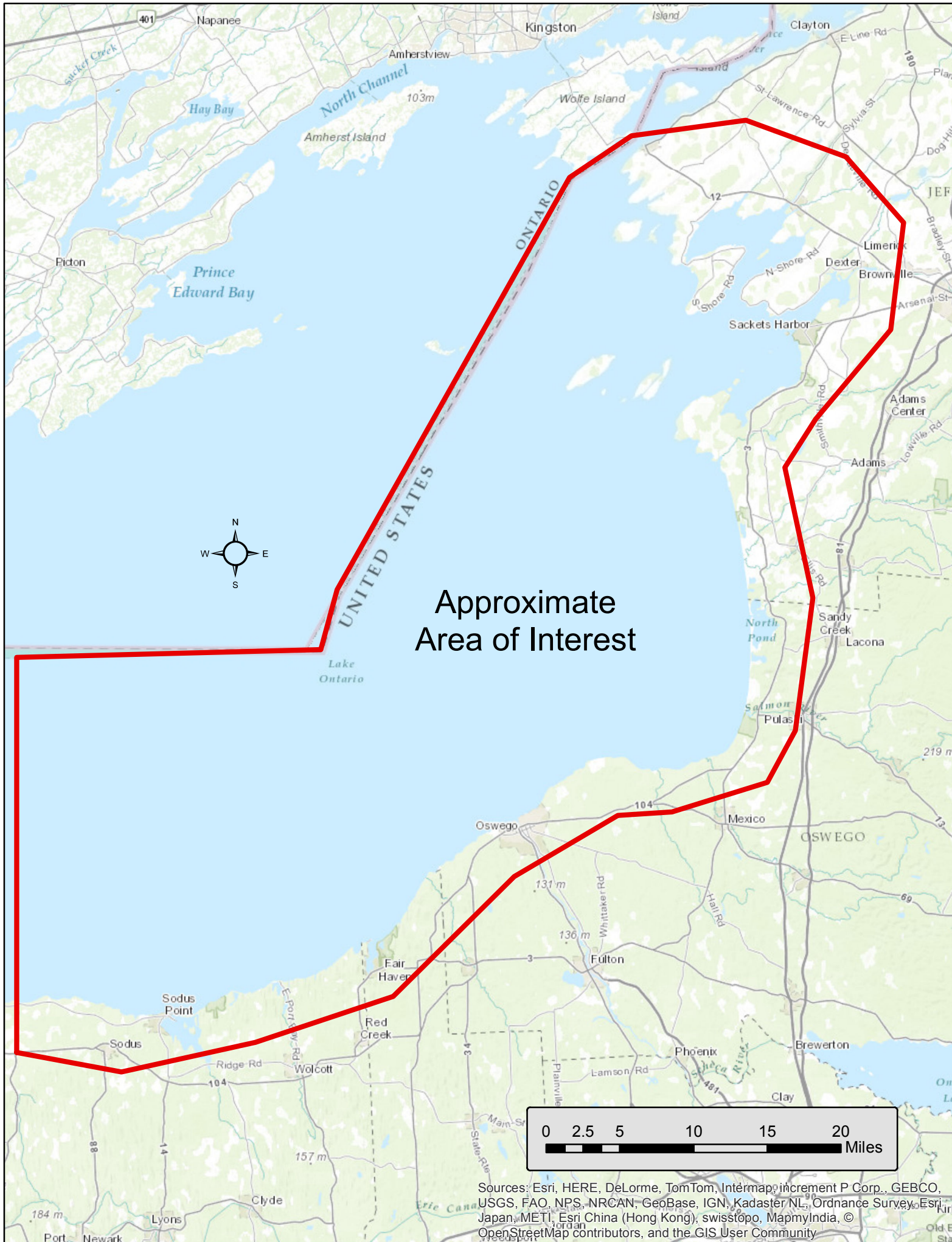
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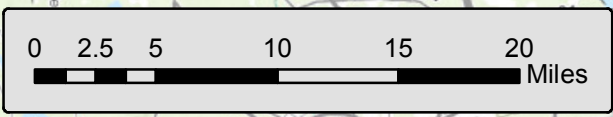
**Submerged shipwrecks such as the St. Peter, 120 feet deep in the Lake Ontario waters off Pultneyville, would be promoted and preserved through the designation of a Great Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary. The 136-foot long schooner sank in 1898.**

**This map depicts the proposed boundaries of the Great Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary. Officials in Wayne, Cayuga, Oswego and Jefferson counties, and the City of Oswego, are applying to the federal government for the designation.**

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## Approximate Area of Interest



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri, Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

## A Quick Look at National Marine Sanctuaries



Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
Kayaking off Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

### Building Strong Communities through Conservation

For the past 40 years, our national marine sanctuaries have worked to protect special places in America's ocean and Great Lakes waters, from the site of a single Civil War shipwreck to a vast expanse of ocean surrounding remote coral reefs and tiny atolls. Backed by one of the nation's strongest pieces of ocean conservation legislation, national marine sanctuaries seek to preserve the extraordinary scenic beauty, biodiversity, historical connections and economic productivity of our most precious underwater treasures. By acting as responsible stewards of these special places, we strengthen our nation now and for future generations.



Photo: NOAA, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary  
Big wave surfer off the coast of California's Half Moon Bay

## The National Marine Sanctuary System: *Engaging, Empowering, and Building Strong Communities*

### Who We Are

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), manages the National Marine Sanctuary System, comprised of 13 national marine sanctuaries, and Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Its network of 14 marine protected areas is one of the oldest (40+ years) and largest in the world, encompassing more than 170,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington State to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The ONMS also leads the National Marine Protected Areas Center, the nation's hub for building innovative partnerships and tools to protect special ocean places.

### Our Way of Doing Business

*We foster partnerships:* The sanctuary system can't do the job of protecting these special ocean places alone. We maintain, invest in, and benefit from hundreds of partnerships with very different organizations, including with non-governmental organizations,

the academic community, and businesses. We have research collaborations with more than 20 organizations, and sanctuary education efforts reaching more than 6.4 million people.

*We engage communities:* For a sanctuary to be successful, it must have the support and involvement of the communities that border and rely on it. We involve communities in their sanctuaries through a variety of methods, including advisory groups, public meetings, volunteer opportunities, and educational and outreach events.

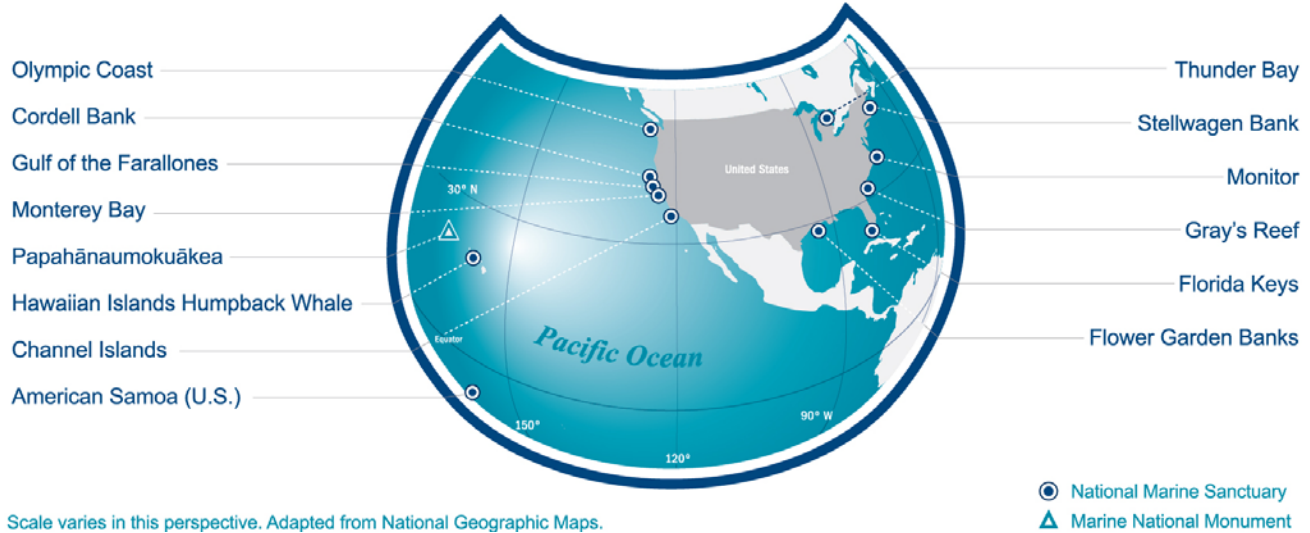
*We empower volunteers:* Volunteers help to ensure sanctuaries remain vibrant for future generations. Through their efforts, volunteers contribute more than 100,000 hours of annual service to the sanctuaries in areas of research, monitoring, enforcement, education and outreach, and management advice. For more information, see [http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/involved/volunteer\\_future.html](http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/involved/volunteer_future.html).



Scuba divers explore Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

Photo: NOAA

# NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



**We innovate:** The ocean is always in motion, and so are we. Sanctuary staff are always on the lookout for how to harness the newest technology and tools in protecting sanctuary resources, for example in developing apps for sanctuary visitors, using unmanned aircraft in oil spill drills and marine species censuses, testing advanced diving technology for our research divers, and pushing the boundaries in the use of international tools to prevent anchoring and vessel grounding damage.

**We see the bigger picture:** Sanctuaries cannot be protected by only working within their boundaries; they are part of the vast, fluid marine environment. We therefore use our sites to project a conservation message and ethic far beyond our boundaries and

engage at every level (locally, regionally, nationally and internationally).

## Our Advisory Councils

National marine sanctuary advisory councils are community-based advisory groups established to provide advice and recommendations to the superintendents of the fourteen sites on issues including management, science, service, and stewardship. More information on advisory councils can be found at <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/ac/welcome.html>.

## We empower leading citizens:

The more than 430 members (including alternates) represent a broad cross-section of the communities that lie adjacent to national

marine sanctuaries, and represent such interests as conservation, education, research, fishing, whale watching, diving and other recreational activities, boating and shipping, tourism, harbors and ports, maritime business, agriculture, and maritime heritage, as well as jurisdictional partners from local, regional, state, tribal, territorial and federal agencies.

## We connect American business to conservation:

The Sanctuary System Business Advisory Council is the first and so far only group of its kind in NOAA, and perhaps in the federal government. It was created, in short, to provide advice to the sanctuary system on how to better engage the corporate sector in protecting our sites and the ocean at large (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/bac/welcome.html>).



Photo: Steve Sellers, NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary

The wheel from the schooner *Cornelia B. Windiate*.



Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Youth experience at a past CoastFest event in Port Angeles, Washington.



Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Giant trevally along a shallow reef in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.