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Testimony Submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
“FY2012 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations”
March 11, 2011

Introduction

For eleven years, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) has strengthened America’s National Marine Sanctuary System, and sanctuary communities from coast to coast, by raising private funds, making strategic grants, promoting science-based public policies, creating innovative partnerships, and advancing public awareness. Our National Marine Sanctuary System needs adequate resources to meet new challenges while fulfilling its existing mandates, and NMSF respectfully requests that the subcommittee recommend funding:

- the *Marine Sanctuary Program Base, within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Operations, Research, and Facilities account, at the FY2010 enacted level of \$49 million;* and
- the *Marine Sanctuaries Construction Base, within NOAA’s Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction Account, at the FY2010 enacted level of \$13 million.*

Joining NMSF in this request is the national network of community-based, non-profit organizations that support specific sites within the sanctuary system. On behalf of their members from coast to coast, the Cordell Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association, Friends of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation, Olympic Coast Alliance, Sanctuary Friends Foundation of the Florida Keys, and Stellwagen Alive! strongly support continued funding of the National Marine Sanctuary System at the FY2010 enacted levels.

Although the enduring value of the sanctuary system’s 14 sites is appreciated each year by tens of thousands of Americans, the President’s Budget Request for 2012 continues a disturbing trend of underfunding the sanctuary program – despite nearly a decade’s worth of unmistakable signals from Democrats and Republicans in both houses of Congress that the program deserves additional funds. While we recognize the challenges associated with providing increased funding in the current budget climate, and the need to fund other important programs under the jurisdiction of the subcommittee, we believe that the President’s FY2012 budget request for national marine sanctuaries falls short of what is needed for even the most basic operations and maintenance. Investments in our National Marine Sanctuary System provide incredible returns to society, both today and for future generations, and we encourage the subcommittee to consider providing additional support to sanctuaries wherever possible.

The National Marine Sanctuary System and NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), part of the National Ocean Service, manages the National Marine Sanctuary System. Consisting of 14 of our nation’s most valued ocean places that encompass more than 150,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington State to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa, the system includes 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Sanctuaries protect vibrant ocean ecosystems such as coral reefs and kelp forests, conserve essential habitat for endangered and commercially-important marine species, and safeguard historically

significant shipwrecks and cultural resources. Ranging in size from less than one square mile to 137,792 square miles, each sanctuary site is a unique place where local communities are consistently involved in operations and management.

ONMS manages the 14 sites in the National Marine Sanctuary System through four regional offices that work with other Federal agencies operating at a regional level and coordinate various programs and assets among the sites, regions, and headquarters. Programmatic oversight, guidance, and support from the headquarters office ensure that the sites function as a coordinated system. Headquarters functions include the development of system-wide, programmatic initiatives; policy and budget development; legislative and regulatory initiatives; management plan review and revisions; development and designation of new sites; and overall guidance and program direction. These functions ensure that the sanctuaries operate in an integrated system that has greater national impact than the sum of the individual site actions.

In annual appropriations bills, Congress provides funding to ONMS through separate accounts for operations and procurement.

- The Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) account funds daily operation of a wide variety of education, research, monitoring and management programs in all 14 sites managed by ONMS. Activities funded by ORF include development and implementation of management plans, research and monitoring programs, cultural resource programs and education & outreach activities; coordination and collaboration with partners; permitting; and management of volunteer programs and citizen advisory councils.
- The Procurement, Acquisition and Construction (PAC) account funds the purchase and overhaul/restoration of assets, including facilities and vessels, across all 14 sites managed by ONMS. Activities funded by PAC include implementation of a comprehensive facilities plan; construction of exhibits, signage and kiosks; development of cooperative centers for education and outreach; and safety improvements, Americans with Disabilities Act-required upgrades, and replacement and repair for NOAA-owned facilities.

Sanctuaries are Economic Engines for Coastal Communities

Providing stable and sufficient appropriations for ONMS will ensure that it can continue to reach over 800 communities in the United States through cutting-edge research initiatives, meaningful public education programs, essential community partnerships, and sustainable management of activities affecting sanctuaries. Furthermore, sufficiently investing in national marine sanctuaries will continue to produce wide-ranging economic benefits.

- In southern Florida, marine tourism and recreation in the two counties adjacent to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary employs about 70,400 people and contributes \$4.5 billion per year to state GDP.¹
- In California, marine science and education facilities focused on the waters of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary had a combined annual budget of over \$250 million and employed over 2,100 people in 2009.²
- Commercial fishing in the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary produces 51 percent of California's Dungeness crab landings, 40 percent of the state's rockfish, and 34

percent of its salmon. The average ex-vessel value of these fisheries between 1997 and 2003 was over \$4.8 million per year.³

- On the shores of Lake Huron, tourists in 2000 spent \$110 million visiting the three counties adjacent to Michigan's Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, providing almost \$36 million in personal income and supporting 1,700 jobs.⁴
- Between 1997 and 2003, 12% of California's commercially-caught salmon and 25% of the state's rockfish were caught within the Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary: dockside value averaged \$753,000 over this period.⁵
- Over 700,000 tourists spent a total of \$126 million on commercial whale-watching trips to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary during 2008, supporting 31 businesses and almost 600 jobs.⁶
- In Washington, cruise ships transiting the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary supported 3,781 jobs and generated \$312.5 million in business revenue in the Puget Sound area in 2009.⁷

We offer these examples to suggest that the benefits of funding our national marine sanctuaries far outweigh the Federal outlays that support them. Investing in these sites does much more than simply protect small areas of the ocean – national marine sanctuaries are economic engines for coastal communities, and investing in sanctuaries is a down payment on the future of our fishing families, dive operators, and whale-watching vendors, not to mention the diversity of other Americans whose livelihoods are wholly dependent on a healthy ocean and coasts.

Sanctuary Management Features Intense Community and Constituent Involvement

Since 1972, ONMS has worked cooperatively with the public and Federal, state, and local officials to allow public access to and commercial and recreational activities within sanctuaries, provided that they do not degrade the underlying resources on which such activities are based. The designation and management of new sanctuaries is wholly dependent on public engagement and features more community involvement than most other processes for Federal agency rulemaking. Regulation of constituent activities in sanctuaries is guided by a rigorous public process that includes three notice-and-comment rulemakings (concerning the proposal to designate a sanctuary, the final designation document, and the proposed sanctuary management plan) and a full Environmental Impact Statement, each of which provides ample opportunities for stakeholders and affected parties to contribute to a 'bottom-up' process where local communities are involved from very beginning. This locally-driven approach to management has been successfully implemented in sanctuaries across the country, and the participation of diverse ocean user groups helps to ensure that the regulatory burden does not fall disproportionately on any one industry or user group.

In addition to involving the public in the designation and regulation of national marine sanctuaries, day-to-day sanctuary operations and management are informed by an extensive nationwide network of Sanctuary Advisory Councils. Comprised of almost 300 individuals across the 14 sites managed by ONMS, Advisory Councils ensure that commercial and recreational fishermen, port and shipping communities, Tribes, states, and local governments, the tourism and recreation industry, researchers, conservationists, and other sanctuary stakeholders are aware of and actively engaged in the management of their local marine sanctuaries. Sanctuaries are also hubs for volunteer activity: in 2009, over 100,000 hours were contributed by volunteers in local sanctuary communities.

Programmatic Outlook for National Marine Sanctuaries under Proposed Funding Levels

We remain concerned that ONMS has not received sufficient appropriations for several consecutive budget cycles. As a result of these shortfalls, and the continued underfunding proposed for FY12, we project that every single vessel operated by ONMS will remain tied up at the dock during the 2012 fiscal year, negatively impacting university, state and Federal partnerships in all sanctuaries. Even the *R/V Manta*, for which Congress recently appropriated funding to enhance management of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico – an area of vital importance to our nation’s energy security and economy – will be rendered completely inactive due to a lack of funding for fuel and operations.

The potential impact of reducing appropriations below the FY2010 enacted level goes far beyond sanctuary vessels: limiting visitor center hours, eliminating research programs and diminishing enforcement capacities will prevent ONMS from fulfilling its statutory mandates while also reducing the economic activity and job creation that surrounds healthy sanctuary communities. For example, funding national marine sanctuaries below the FY2010 enacted level could force the program to:

- **Cut treasured public access and recreation opportunities for all Americans.**
Funding cuts risk the Florida Keys NMS’ 767 mooring buoys, which provide public access and recreational opportunities within the sanctuary while protecting coral reefs and shipwrecks from anchor damage, preserving them for future generations.
- **Restrict enforcement operations that protect legal fishermen by guarding against illegal fishing.**
Lack of funding jeopardizes on-water patrols for illegal lobster fishermen in the Florida Keys NMS. In a single 2010 case, illegal fishermen pilfered 8,500 pounds of spiny lobster within a six-month period. The lobster had a street value of \$155,000 – money that was effectively taken out of the pockets of hardworking, legal fishermen.
- **Dramatically shrink visitor center hours.**
Visitor centers are a vital link between sanctuaries and the millions of Americans who visit the coast each year and serve as the public face of the entire NOAA organization. Sanctuary visitor centers see over 200,000 visitors per year, including the Mokupāpapa Discovery Center (Hilo, HI), Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center (Alpena, MI), and Florida Keys EcoDiscovery Center (Key West, FL).
- **Eliminate cooperative education efforts with local museums that leverage private funds for taxpayer benefits.**
Placing exhibits in partner institutions, like the California Academy of Sciences’ three-story “California Coast” aquarium, is often the most successful and cost-effective method for reaching the American public. Well over 1 million people visit the academy every year and learn how the Gulf of the Farallones NMS protects America’s valuable natural, cultural, and historical resources.
- **Cancel collaborative research efforts with local universities that leverage private funds for taxpayer benefits.**
Funding cuts could endanger partnerships with Oregon State University, Stanford University, and the University of California for collection of wind, tide, current, and marine life data that is essential for maritime commerce and search-and-rescue operations within the Channel Islands, Monterey Bay, Gulf of the Farallones, Cordell Bank, and Olympic Coast NMS.

- **Dismantle successful education initiatives that save taxpayers money by focusing on low-cost prevention instead of expensive restoration or remediation.**

The Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans (MERITO) program's media outreach has touched over 13 million California residents. The California Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program increases the stewardship ethic of participating youth, and local communities in the Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, New England, and Pacific Northwest have imported the program.

NOAA Needs Sufficient Funds to Fulfill its Responsibilities to the American People

As a member of the Friends of NOAA coalition, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation works with other supporters, stakeholders, and partners of NOAA to educate and inform interested audiences about the full range of NOAA activities, enabling the agency to more effectively carry out its responsibilities relating to our ocean and coasts, fisheries, research, and weather and climate, including satellites. NOAA is one of the premier science agencies in the Federal Government and provides decision makers with critically important data, products, and services that promote and enhance the nation's economy, security, environment, and quality of life. NOAA's weather forecasts and warnings alone generate annualized benefits of \$31.5 billion, and the agency's ocean and atmospheric research, fisheries management, and satellite enterprises are essential for the continued prosperity of our nation.⁸ For example, recovery of overfished stocks has produced an additional \$2.1 billion in income and \$5 billion in sales over the past decade.⁹ Providing insufficient funding for NOAA will only serve to diminish the economic activity and job creation that is at present successfully revitalizing communities across America.

We hope the subcommittee will see the benefits of investing in NOAA and the National Marine Sanctuary System, and that a failure to provide sufficient funding will endanger, quite literally, American lives and livelihoods across the nation.

¹ National Ocean Economics Program. (2004) "Ocean Economy Data." Available: <http://www.oceaneconomics.org/Market/ocean/oceanEconResults.asp?IC=N&selState=12&selCounty=12086&selCounty=12087&selYears=All&selSector=6&selIndust=All&selValue=All&cbMultiplier=Multiply&selOut=display&noepID=3204>.

² Griggs, Gary, Monterey Bay Crescent Ocean Research Consortium. (2009) "Major Marine Sciences Facilities in the Monterey Bay Crescent- 2009." Available: https://secure.got.net/domains/mbcorc.org/Membership_Info_files/MontereyBayLabs2009.pdf.

³ Scholz, Astrid, and Charles Steinback, Ecotrust. (2005). "Socioeconomic Profile of Fishing Activities and Communities Associated with the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries." Available: http://www.ecotrust.org/jmpr/JMPRsocioeco_final.pdf.

⁴ Parrillo, Jordan, and Rod Ehler (2007). "A Socioeconomic Overview of Northeast Michigan Counties." U.S. Department of Commerce: NOAA National Ocean Service, National Marine Sanctuary Program. Available: http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/downloads/nemia/NEMIA_Chapter_2_Socio-economic_Assessment.pdf.

⁵ Scholz, Astrid, and Charles Steinback, Ecotrust.

⁶ O'Connor, Simon *et al* (2009). Whale Watching Worldwide: tourism numbers, expenditures and expanding economic benefits, a special report from the International Fund for Animal Welfare. Prepared by Economists at Large. Available: http://www.ifaw.org/Publications/Program_Publications/Whales/asset_upload_file841_55365.pdf.

⁷ Port of Seattle. "Seattle Sets New Record for Cruise Ships in 2009." 10/26/2009. Available: http://www.portseattle.org/news/press/2009/10_26_2009_01.shtml.

⁸ Lazo, J.K., D.M. Waldman, B.H. Morrow, and J.A. Thacher. 2010. "Assessment of Household Evacuation Decision Making and the Benefits of Improved Hurricane Forecasting." *Weather and Forecasting*. 25(1):207-219.

⁹ National Marine Fisheries Service.