
HABITAT HOTLINE ATLANTIC

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Spring 2009, Volume XVI, Number 1



Strength in Numbers

Announcing the Framework for the National System of MPAs

The following is an excerpt from the Executive Summary for the *Framework for the National System of MPAs of the United States of America* from the National Marine Protected Areas Center at NOAA:

Increasing impacts on the world's oceans from coastal and offshore development, overfishing, a changing climate, natural events, and other sources are straining the health of marine ecosystems and the Great Lakes. Impacts to these intricately balanced environments include declining fish populations, degradation of coral reefs and other vital habitats, threats to rare or endangered species, and loss of artifacts and resources that represent the diverse cultural heritage of the United States. The effects of these losses are significant and jeopardize the social and economic fabric of the nation.

In the United States and around the world, marine protected areas (MPAs) are increasingly

recognized as an important and promising management tool for mitigating or buffering some of these impacts. When used effectively and as a part of a broader ecosystem-based approach to management, MPAs can help to restore and maintain healthy marine and Great Lakes environments by contributing to the overall protection of critical marine habitats and resources. In this way, effective MPAs also can offer social and economic opportunities for current and future generations, such as tourism, biotechnology, fishing, education, and scientific research.

MPAs are designated and managed at all levels of government by a variety of agencies including parks, fisheries, wildlife, natural resource and historic resource departments, among others. U.S. MPAs have been established by well over 100 legal authorities, with some federal and state agencies managing more than one MPA program, each with its own legal purpose. There



Source: NOAA

(continued on page 2)



(continued from page 1)



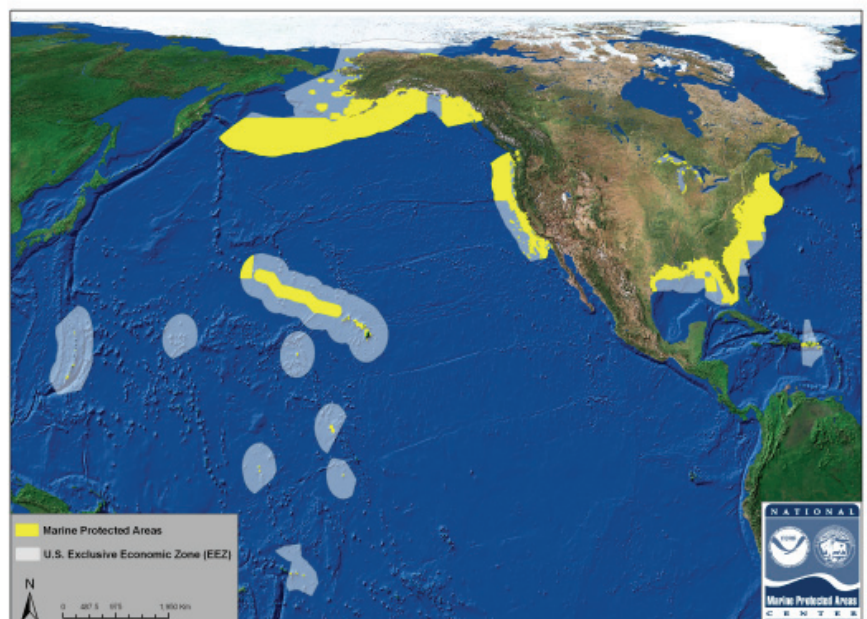
Source: NOAA

are approximately 1,700 existing MPAs in the United States that have been established by federal, state, territorial, and local governments to protect and conserve the nation's rich natural and cultural marine heritage

and sustainable production resources. These MPAs have been designated to achieve a myriad of conservation objectives, ranging from conservation of biodiversity hotspots, to preservation of sunken historic vessels, to protection of spawning aggregations important to commercial and recreational fisheries. Similarly, the level of protection provided by these MPAs ranges from fully protected or no-take marine reserves to sites allowing multiple uses, including fishing, recreational, and industrial uses.

Recognizing the significant role that U.S. MPAs play in conserving marine heritage and sustainable use, and the lack of a national institution for comprehensive MPA planning, coordination, and support, Presidential Executive Order 13158 of May 26, 2000 (Order)... calls for the development of a National System of Marine Protected Areas (national system). The Order clearly calls for a national and not a federal system, and requires collaboration not only with other federal agencies, but also with... other entities, as appropriate, including the MPA Federal Advisory Committee. The Order further specifies that the national system be scientifically based, comprehensive, and represent the nation's diverse marine ecosystems and natural and cultural resources...

This final *Framework for the National System of MPAs of the United States of America* (Framework) is the result of a multi-year development effort... The Framework recognizes that U.S. MPA programs can achieve more efficient, effective conservation of the nation's important natural and cultural resources by working together rather than separately, and that many solutions require collaboration across programs with their own individual mandates, levels of government, and even international boundaries. It proposes a national system that is, initially, an assemblage of existing MPA sites, systems, and networks established and managed by federal, state, territorial, commonwealth, tribal, or local governments, acknowledging and building upon the contributions of these foundation programs. In addition, the Framework outlines collaborative, transparent processes for MPA programs at all levels of government to work together at regional, national, and international levels and with public participation to achieve common conservation objectives through comprehensive MPA planning; identification of enhanced or new MPAs that may be needed; and support for improved MPA science, stewardship, and effectiveness.



Source: NOAA

The Framework outlines the following key components of the national system:

- A set of overarching national system goals and priority conservation objectives.
- MPA eligibility criteria and other key definitions.
- A nomination process for existing MPAs to be included in the national system that provides opportunities for public input.
- A science-based, public process for identifying conservation gaps in the national system.
- A process for improving regional and ecosystem-based coordination of MPAs by: creating new or strengthening existing regional forums for MPA coordination; identifying and catalyzing action to address shared priorities for improving MPA science, stewardship, and effectiveness; and developing collaborative, ecosystem-based MPA planning to identify and recommend MPAs for inclusion in the new national system.
- Mechanisms for national and international coordination.
- Implementation guidance regarding federal agency responsibilities to avoid harm to resources protected by the National System of MPAs.
- Mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on national system progress and priorities.

Through collaborative efforts among U.S. MPA programs and stakeholders, the national system can achieve the Order's goal of enhancing the comprehensive conservation of the nation's natural and cultural marine heritage and the ecologically and economically sustainable use of the marine environment for present and future generations.

For more information, or a copy of the complete Framework, please go to: www.mpa.gov, or email Ben.Sherman@noaa.gov.

SPOTLIGHT ON ELIMINATING MARINE DEBRIS

On March 10, 2009, the Ocean Conservancy released *A Rising Tide of Ocean Debris and What We Can Do About It*. The report features the organization's annual Marine Debris Index – the world's only country-by-country, state-by-state analysis of trash in our ocean and waterways. The trash was collected and the data recorded by the nearly 400,000 volunteers around the world who combed their local beaches and waterways during the 23rd International Coastal Cleanup – the largest

volunteer effort of its kind. Volunteers removed 6.8 million pounds of debris, from 6,485 sites in 104 countries and 42 U.S. states and the District of



Photo: Tamara Thoreson Pierce

Columbia with a common mission of improving the health of the ocean. This year's report zeroes in on the hazardous impacts of trash on wildlife and the resilience of our ocean in the wake of rising sea levels, warming and acidification, some of the most serious effects of global climate change.

“Our ocean is sick, and our actions have made it so. We simply cannot continue to put our trash in the ocean. The evidence turns up every day in dead and injured marine life, littered beaches that discourage tourists, and choked ocean ecosystems,” said Vikki Spruill, president and CEO of Ocean Conservancy. “This report – analyzing nearly seven million pounds of trash – is a global snapshot that shows how we are part of the marine debris problem—and a key to the solution. By changing behaviors and policies, individuals, companies, and governments can help improve the health of our ocean, the Earth's life support system.”

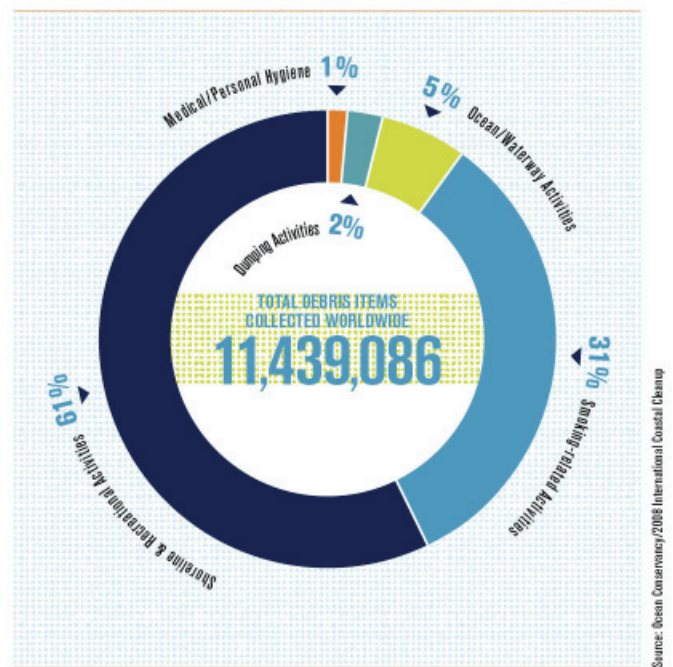
(continued on page 4)

Ocean trash is one of the most widespread pollution problems of our time, and the report goes beyond the numbers to identify the sources of the pollution and make a series of recommendations to stop marine debris. Armed with knowledge about the most prevalent components of marine debris, elected officials can make informed policy decisions, community leaders can tailor and expand recycling and other trash-reduction programs, corporate decision makers can improve technology and reduce packaging, and individuals can recycle, reuse, or properly dispose of trash to keep these items out of the ocean in the first place. “Trash doesn’t fall from the sky, it falls from our hands,” continued Spruill. “Humans have created the problem of marine debris, and humans should step up and solve it.”

The 2008 International Coastal Cleanup, by the numbers:

- This year, 104 countries and locations participated in the Cleanup, a more than 30% jump in the number over 2007 -- a powerful demonstration that awareness of the marine debris problem is surging around the globe.
- 443 animals were found entangled or trapped by marine debris, of those, 268 were found alive and released.
- Volunteers removed 6.8 million pounds (11.4 million items) of debris – the weight of 18 blue whales.
- Volunteers tracked 43 items during the Cleanup; the top 3 most frequently found items were cigarette butts, plastic bags, and food wrappers/containers.
- Our report shows the same percentage and types of items found along the ocean were found in inland waterway cleanups. According to the EPA, more than 50% of marine debris starts out on land, reinforcing the land-sea connections we all share.

WORLDWIDE SOURCES OF MARINE DEBRIS



Among the report’s other findings:

- Every year, thousands of marine mammals, sea turtles, seabirds, and other animals are sickened, injured, or killed by trash in our ocean. Leaky paint cans, empty yogurt cups, and abandoned fishing gear can lead to entanglement and suffocation of wildlife. Ingested trash can also cause choking, blockage of the digestive system, or toxic poisoning.
- Keeping our ocean free of trash is one of the easiest ways we can help improve the ocean’s resilience as it tries to adapt to the harmful effects of climate change such as melting ice, rising sea levels, and changing ocean chemistry.

Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup engages volunteer organizations and individuals to remove trash and debris from the world’s beaches and waterways; to identify the sources of debris, and to change the behaviors that cause marine debris in the first place. Visit www.oceanconservancy.org to download the report and to find out what you can do to make a difference, including signing up for the 24th International Coastal Cleanup to be held around the world on September 19, 2009.

AROUND THE COAST: ECONOMIC STIMULATION

An economic stimulus package called The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, includes significant funding for clean water, drinking water, and habitat restoration programs. Primarily, the bill aims to help the economy recover from a severe recession, and promptly provide jobs. In addition, a portion of spending is being allocated to wastewater and drinking water infrastructure and ecosystem restoration. This funding will allow communities to invest in critical water systems that have been neglected for too long through insufficient funding and rapid development. However, in an era of tightening budgets and growing deficits, we cannot afford to repeat the wasteful and inefficient investments in water infrastructure that we have made in the past. We must embrace green infrastructure techniques such as green roofs and rain gardens, as well as water efficiency, if we are to secure the clean water we will need to drive future economic growth. Fortunately, green infrastructure and water efficiency are proven solutions that can create jobs, and solve stormwater and drinking water problems in a cost-effective manner.

We also have the opportunity to undo decades worth of damage done to our nation's rivers by embracing the habitat restoration opportunities the stimulus package offers. Removing outdated dams, retrofitting ineffectual culverts, and investing in natural approaches to flood management creates jobs in a variety of fields and can build more resilient communities.

What Funding Is Available?

Clean Water:

- \$4 billion for clean water projects and \$2 billion for drinking water projects: This money will be going through the State Revolving Fund (SRF) programs, and \$1.2 billion (20%) of that total must be used for a mandatory set aside for green infrastructure (e.g., stormwater mitigation), water or energy efficiency improvements, or other environmentally innovative activities. Of the total \$6 billion, a full 50% of the SRF funds must be reserved for principal forgiveness or negative interest rate loans (essentially making the money grants).
- Visit the Environmental Protection Agency's SRF Stimulus Webpage (<http://www.epa.gov/water/eparecovery/>) for more information and guidance on this process.

Habitat Restoration:

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: \$230 million for operations, research, and facilities including addressing a backlog in habitat restoration and other activities. Exact amount to be allocated to restoration is yet to be determined.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Construction: \$115 million for priority construction, repair, habitat restoration, and other activities on Service properties.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Resource Management: \$165 million for priority critical deferred maintenance, capital improvements, habitat restoration, and other activities on Service properties.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service: \$290 million for structural and nonstructural watershed infrastructure improvements, including purchase and restoration of floodplain easements.
- U.S. Forest Service: \$650 million for priority road, bridge, and trail maintenance, including related watershed restoration and ecosystem enhancement projects.

Source: American Rivers

www.americanrivers.org/stimulus



Source: NOAA

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1444 Eye Street, N.W., 6th Floor
Washington D.C. 20005

Return Service Requested

HABITAT HOTLINE ATLANTIC

Jessie Thomas
Editor

Funded by



Any portion of this newsletter may be reproduced locally with credit given to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Habitat Program.

Printed on 100% Recycled Paper Using Vegetable-Based Ink

IN THE NEWS

EPA General Permit for Ballast Water Discharges Goes Into Effect

On February 6, 2009, all domestically flagged commercial vessels and foreign flagged vessels, including cruise ships, will have to comply with EPA's new Vessel General Permit (VGP) in order to discharge ballast water into waters of the United States. This requirement does not include recreational vessels, or military vessels. Historically, ballast water was exempt from Clean Water Act National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements. Ballast water is water that is taken in or released by vessels to compensate for changes in a ship's weight. Taking in ballast water becomes a problem when non-native or invasive species are brought into the ship with the water and later released into new environments where they can cause environmental harm. Vessels must also use onshore treatment of ballast water tanks "if compatible onshore treatment for ballast water is practicable and achievable." Finally, all vessels equipped with ballast water tanks must comply with a number of training, documentation, and reporting requirements.

Source: Laura Fandino, *Environmental News*

Number of Imperiled Diadromous and Freshwater Fishes Grows Dramatically

The American Fisheries Society has published an article entitled, *Conservation Status of Imperiled North American Freshwater and Diadromous Fishes*, by H. L. Jelks, S. J. Walsh, N. M. Burkhead, S. Contreras-Balderas, E. Diaz-Pardo, D. A. Hendrickson, J. Lyons, N. E. Mandrak, F. McCormick, J. S. Nelson, S. P. Platania, B. A. Porter, C. B. Renaud, J. J. Schmitter-Soto, E. B. Taylor, and M. L. Warren, Jr. Nearly 40% of all North American freshwater (including diadromous) species are imperiled, according to this 2008 report. "For years most of our member scientists have noted fish population declines in their region or area of expertise," said AFS President Bill Franzin. "However, seeing the numbers totaled up for the entire continent shows the enormous scale of this problem, which will require immediate national and international efforts to address." Major causes for including fish on this list include habitat degradation and restricted range. The original article is available online at www.fisheries.org/afs/docs/fisheries/fisheries_3308.pdf, or see the interactive website hosted by USGS at <http://fisc.er.usgs.gov/afs>.