

# SANCTUARY WATCH

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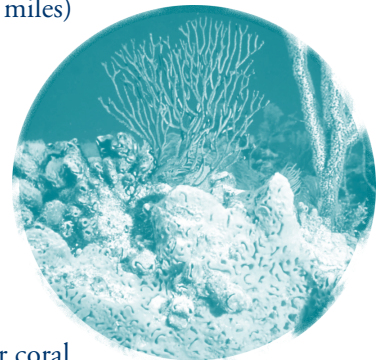
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### Coral Reef Task Force Campaigns to Preserve Threatened Reefs

The U.S. Coral Reef Task Force announced a landmark decision in support of coral reefs threatened by human use with the release of its National Action Plan during a special meeting in Washington, D.C. on March 2, 2000.

Environmentalists studying threats to the nation’s 8,600 square miles of reef point to overfishing, pollution, dredging, collecting, habitat destruction and harmful commercial activities. Global warming has also impacted coral reefs. Ship groundings have also wreaked havoc on coral ecosystems.

The new proposal includes a Clinton administration commitment to establish marine reserves by 2010 in one-fifth (1300 square miles) of the nation’s coral reefs, an area about the size of Rhode Island. Coral reefs in Florida, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the Pacific trust territories are being considered. Eleven government agencies, headed by NOAA and the Department of the Interior, will join in restoration and preservation efforts. State officials and territorial agencies will also be tapped to help the lead agencies to develop a scientific consensus on what reefs should be set aside as ecological reserves.



The National Plan also substantially increases funding for coral reef research and preservation. The current level of spending—\$11 million—will increase to \$25 million. Most of the funds are slated for monitoring and mapping endangered reefs.

In July 1997, NOAA’s Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary led the way in protecting coral reefs when it established an original network of “no-take” marine reserves. Within these reserves —18 sanctuary preservation areas, four research-only

*(Cont. pg. 4)*

### Marine Sanctuaries Consider Cables within their Borders

In recent months, the National Marine Sanctuary Program has received several industry requests to install fiber optic telecommunications cables through National Marine Sanctuaries. These applications (one in Olympic Coast Sanctuary, two in Monterey Bay Sanctuary, and one in Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary) are being evaluated on a case by case basis. Of these applications, only the Olympic Coast cable has been approved to date. The other applications remain under review.

Secretary of Commerce William Daley has expressed interest in this issue as the Department has responsibility for the marine environment (through NOAA), some aspects of telecommunications (through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration), and the economy as a

*(Cont. pg. 2)*



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## Sanctuary Ocean Count 2000

Volunteers on Oahu and the Big Island enjoyed a whale of a time watching the ocean for a sight of humpback whales during the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary's Annual Ocean Count Event on February 26, 2000. A day dedicated to counting the island's migrating population also included a dramatic ocean rescue by volunteers of a drowning scuba diver.

Over 400 people attended training sessions and participated in Count 2000. During the annual event, volunteer whale watchers, posted at different shore-based locations around Oahu and the Big Island, kept tallies of both numbers of whales and the types of whale activities they witnessed. Oahu whale-watchers recorded approximately 300 humpback whale sightings from 34 different shore stations. Big Island whale watchers recorded over 266 humpback whales at 20 different shore stations. Sightings of spinner dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, green sea turtles, a monk seal were also recorded.

Several studies indicate that the humpback whales population is steadily increasing in waters around the Hawaii, the species' primary winter breeding and nursery ground. Scientists are hopeful that Ocean Count results will help them to determine the distribution and activity patterns of whales.

"Yearly comparisons of Ocean Count data can help us to identify hot spots where whales like to congregate as well as areas they seem to avoid. If there is some condition that is attractive to the



Photo: Becka Smith

*Sanctuary Ocean Count Volunteers on Magic Island jumped to the rescue of a stricken scuba diver.*

whales, this will give us a better picture of what it is and how to address it," says biologist and sanctuary research consultant Daniela Feinholz.

Dedicated volunteers on Oahu's Ala Moana Beach turned from whale watching to ocean rescue when an stricken scuba diver was pulled unconscious from the water. The two volunteers responded to the cries of victim's husband who was hampered by strong waves from pulling his wife to shore and brought her to shore to paramedics on the scene.

"The enthusiasm of our volunteers helps to ensure that the whales and their environment stay protected," says Allen Tom, Sanctuary Manager. believe it is the right thing to do."

—Naomi MacInstosh

## Marine Cables *(cont'd)*

as a whole. On February 28 and 29, DOC and NOAA convened a discussion on submarine cables with representatives from the telecommunications and cable industries, environmental NGOs, fishing representatives, and NOAA officials. Although the discussion centered on a draft set of principles for laying cables within the marine environment, specific emphasis was made on cable installation within National Marine Sanctuaries. The principles provide to industry guidelines on NOAA's environmental concerns so that sensitive marine environments will be considered when future cable routes are planned. A revised draft of the principles will appear in the Federal Register before May 1.

—Helen Golde

## Dirty Words Every Sanctuary Needs to Know

*“Want to hear a dirty word?”*

*“Than move closer to your radio”*

*“Ready?”*

*“WATER POLLUTION. I told you it was dirty.”*

This compelling opening introduces a Monterey Bay Sanctuary radio ad campaign, Dirty Words, to educate the general public about storm drains and their connection to rivers, creeks, streams and ultimately the water quality within the sanctuary.

The 60-second radio spot, in both English and Spanish, airs the month of April on all the major radio stations throughout the Monterey Bay region. The Sanctuary hopes that the radio campaign will help build awareness of how storm drains work, the significance of urban runoff nationwide, includes tips on motor oil recycling. Future campaigns include “first flush,” “urban runoff,” and “plastics.”

“Dirty Words” was envisioned and developed by Maris Sidenstecker, Monterey Bay Sanctuary’s Water Quality Protection Program Educator. The project included efforts from the City of Watsonville, with grant funding provided from the Resources Agency of California. The City of Monterey is also helping to support the campaign. Additional funding will be needed to continue the radio campaign. The Monterey Bay Sanctuary hopes that the ad campaign will be used by other Sanctuaries and coastal communities.

—Maris Sidenstecker

## Monitoring Change in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary

The Sanctuary’s 23 no-take zones, established in 1997 to protect habitat and species in the Florida Keys coral reef ecosystem, are the focus of a five-year zone-monitoring program to help determine the effect of these areas on biodiversity and human activities. A February review of Year 2 monitoring results inside and outside the no-take areas provided data on the zone’s performance: populations of fish and mobile benthic invertebrates, macroalgal cover and biomass, coral cover and diversity, coral recruitment, and zone usage.

Year 2 monitoring results indicate that mobile, heavily exploited species such as spiny lobster,

snapper, and grouper continue to show increases in no-take areas. Specifically, legal-sized spiny lobsters were more abundant in no-take areas than in reference sites of comparable habitat. Researchers found that the mean densities (number of individuals per sample) for three of four exploited reef fish species were higher in the Sanctuary Preservation Areas (SPAs) than in fished reference sites. Another fish study showed an overall increase in abundance of four species of snapper and hogfish at 7 out of 9 no-take areas monitored by volunteers.

As expected, no-take protection on conch and urchins, creatures not directly exploited, and the slower-growing, bottom-dwelling hard and soft corals and sponges have not yet become apparent. Coral monitoring programs indicate no consistent differences in coral recruitment, juvenile mortality rates, or percent cover between the no-take areas and reference sites. Faster-growing benthic organisms such as algae and soft corals showed variability in abundance based on season, water depths, and location, with no major differences between protected and unprotected sites noticed at this time. Researchers monitoring these parameters cautioned that the high variability of benthic components over space and time necessitates looking at the effects of no-take regulations on a decadal time scale.

In addition, Year 2 results were heavily influenced by coral bleaching in 1997 and 1998, Hurricane Georges in September 1998, and Hurricane Irene in October 1999. These storms significantly impacted the Florida Keys coral reef ecosystem, complicating interpretation of the monitoring results. In some study areas, hard and soft corals and sponges were completely devastated by these events.

Continued monitoring of the no-take areas will be necessary before trends can be identified. A comprehensive picture of how the zones are performing in light of natural variability will not be available until the year 2002 when State and Federal resource managers evaluate the use of zones as a management tool. To obtain a copy of the 1999 Zone Performance Review, please go to [http://fknms.nos.noaa.gov/research\\_monitoring.html](http://fknms.nos.noaa.gov/research_monitoring.html).

—Joanne Delaney  
Ben Haskell



## NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES™

**vision** *People value marine sanctuaries as treasured places protected for future generations.*

**mission** *Serve as the trustee for the nation's system of marine protected areas to conserve, protect, and enhance their biodiversity, ecological integrity, and cultural legacy.*

### April & May Calendar

#### Natural events

• In April Humpback whales return to the Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary from the Caribbean to feed on sand lance. In the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale Sanctuary, humpback whales begin to leave for their summer feeding grounds in Alaska. In May, Humpback whales can be sighted in the Channel Islands Marine Sanctuary, remaining through August.

**April 22** • Gray's Reef Sanctuary hosts Ocean Fest in downtown Savannah as part of Earth Day celebrations. NOAA's ship *Ferrel* will hold an open house.

**May 5** • Olympic Coast Sanctuary Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting in Port Angeles, WA.

**May 20 - 21** • *The Fabled Cape: Life and Legends of Cape Flattery*. Join naturalists from Olympic Coast Sanctuary for a boat trip to rugged Cape Flattery. The waters around Tatoosh Island and the Cape team with marine life: tufted puffins, northern fulmars & sooty shearwaters. For more information, call 360-452-2283.

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## Marine Sanctuaries Activities on Earth Day 2000

The National Marine Sanctuaries join with their supporters to celebrate Earth Day 2000. From the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean and down to the Gulf of Mexico, the sanctuaries took part in a variety of celebrations to honor our water planet. To get the details, go to <http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/news/features/news000301.html>.

### Coral Reef Task Force Proposal *(Cont.d)*

the area close to 10 percent. This plan would designate an area in the westernmost portion of the sanctuary. The sanctuary encompasses 3,674-square miles of the Florida Keys.

"We are really ahead of the game with what we currently have in place in the Florida Keys," said Sanctuary Superintendent Billy Causey. "It's exciting that coral reefs are getting the attention that they. The Coral Reef Task Force Action Plan is a positive step in preserving and conserving U.S. reefs"

Coral reefs often called "the rainforest of the sea" have existed for thousands of years. Within the communities of tiny creatures, a vast marine world thrives attracted to the reefs for food and protection. Coral reefs provide food, jobs, protection from storms and billions of dollars in revenues each year to local communities and national economies. Scientists consider coral reefs as Coral Reef Task Force Plan

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