

# SANCTUARY WATCH

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### Protecting Critical Coral Reef Habitat in the Tortugas

A lush coral growth called Sherwood Forest...Golden crab, tilefish and snowy grouper deepwater habitats...a critical spawning site for grouper and snapper called Riley's Hump...each can be found in NOAA's Tortugas Ecological Reserve, a new "no-take" area within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.



*The pristine nature of Tortugas coral reefs will be protected through the creation of this new ecological reserve.*

The Tortugas Reserve is designed to preserve biodiversity, maintain ecosystem integrity, and provide a reference site to help scientists discriminate between natural and human-induced changes to the Keys's ecosystem. Oceanographic research indicates that a marine reserve in the Tortugas has a high potential for exporting planktonic larvae downstream to the Keys and the east coast of Florida. Protecting breeding grounds ensures that marine populations will continue to thrive in the Keys.

The Tortugas Ecological Reserve grew out of a Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary plan on a proposal drafted by the Tortugas 2000 working group and adopted by the Sanctuary Advisory Council. The 25-member working group included commercial and recreational fishermen, divers, scientists, conservationists, citizens-at-large and resource managers.

A Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Supplemental Management Plan for the proposed reserve was published in May 2000. This document detailed several boundary and regulatory alternatives being considered by the sanctuary. Public response on the draft environmental impact statement was accepted until July 31, 2000. During this time over 4,000 comments were received from throughout the United States, and the majority of comments favored a ecological reserve in the Tortugas.

*(Cont'd pg.4)*

### Titanic Explorer to Survey Thunder Bay Marine Sanctuary

Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve, the nation's newest marine sanctuary and first in the Great Lakes, is the focus of a June shipwreck mapping survey conducted by Dr. Bob Ballard, founder and president of the non-profit Institute for Exploration (IFE). IFE is partnering with NOAA and the state of Michigan to survey and map the deepwater wrecks in the new sanctuary/preserve.

Dr. Ballard is best known for his 1985 discovery of the shipwreck site of the *Titanic*. Most recently, Dr. Ballard searched the site of the Pearl Harbor memorial in Hawaii for the remains of a sunken Japanese midjet sub.

"We are excited to have Dr. Ballard's team in Thunder Bay for the sanctuary's inaugural project. IFE brings state-of-the-art technology that will provide the sanctuary with

*(Cont'd pg. 4)*



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## NOAA's Environmental Hero

As the only naturalist in the San Mateo County Park System, Bob Breen's duties at the John V. Fitzgerald Reserve (FMR) can change, depending on the day, from scientific researcher to volunteer program coordinator to education developer and to protection and enforcement officer.

On May 18, 2001, Breen's many efforts on behalf of the FMR and his volunteer work with the Gulf of the National Marine Sanctuary were recognized when he was named a NOAA's Environmental Hero during a ceremony at the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park.

NOAA's annual award recognizes U.S. citizens who have contributed to the protection and preservation of the nation's environment.

"He has always been committed to educating the public about the value of watching wildlife instead of taking it," said Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary Research Coordinator Jan Roletto.

Roletto remembers when sea otters began hauling out on the rocks in the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, and Breen expressed his concern for their safety.

"I told him that it's very unusual for California sea otters to haul out and that they only did when they feel safe," said Roletto. "Bob was very proud that the otters could be that comfortable in his reserve."

Because of Breen's observations of the otters in the reserve, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game now consider northern San Mateo County as part of the otter's range, and the two organizations extended their surveys to include the reserve.

Beyond reserve and sanctuary boundaries, Breen takes his enthusiasm for marine conservation into a university-credit marine biology class, one of the first in the state, at Half Moon Bay High School. The class teaches students about marine biodiversity, habitats and the role that sea anemones and rudibranchs, seabirds and harbor seals play in the Gulf of the Farallones Marine Sanctuary and the FMR.

In addition to teaching the importance of marine protected areas to future marine conservationists, Breen has worked with the Gulf of the Farallones Sanctuary in a variety of activities.

"Unfortunately, there've been several oil spills—

the *Puerto Rican Houston*—in the worked with the collect birds oil spill and take tarballs," said

Despite the environmental Breen said he's seen a big shift

in public awareness in his 32 years of watching over the reserve and chronicling its health.

"Many in the community didn't want the reserve," said Breen. "I once talked to a gas station attendant on Highway One who was said he was disgusted when families would spend a day at the beach collecting seas stars and chiton (mollusks) and then dump the marine life in the gas station's parking lot on the way home. You don't see that kind of behavior anymore," Breen said.

Bob Breen believes anyone can become an Environmental Hero with a little persistent dedication and effort to "do a little extra for the environment even it its on your own time."



Photo: Paul Wong

Bob Breen accepts NOAA award with wife Mary (l) and son Michael and family friend Christine Benz (r)

## Reef Awareness Week in the Florida Keys

During Reef Awareness Week (July 22-28), Reef Relief will be celebrating 15 years of grassroots efforts with a full schedule of events in the Florida Keys (online at [www.reefrelief.org](http://www.reefrelief.org)) highlighting the world's third largest coral reef.

Reef Relief, a non-profit membership organization dedicated to protecting coral reefs and increasing the public's knowledge of the importance of coral reefs, organizes the yearly event.

The week's festivities include Relief Founder founder Craig Quirolo's State of the Reef Address on the new Key West Marine Park at the organization's annual membership meeting. In addition, Dr. James Porter will be speak on "Butterflies and Corals in the Florida Keys." Author David Helvarg (*Blue Frontier*) and novelist Theresa Foley (*Cetacea*) will be signing their books.

Coral reef excursions, lessons on the nautical art of splicing line, a film fest, children's interpretive reef tours, an afternoon lecture by Dr. Larry Brand on "The Science of Florida Bay and the Role of Nutrients" are also planned. To learn more about Reef Relief, visit their home page at [www.reefrelief.org](http://www.reefrelief.org) or write to Reef Relief, P.O. Box 430, Key West Florida or e-mail [reef@bellsouth.net](mailto:reef@bellsouth.net).

## African MPA Project Continues

NOAA's Office of the National Marine Sanctuaries staff are continuing a 12-month marine protected area management (MPA) exchange program with colleagues from South Africa. Earlier this year, four teams of South African researchers stayed a week in the Silver Spring headquarters to get an overview of the national system before traveling on to a sanctuary field site. To date Channel Islands, Florida Keys, Flower Garden Banks, Gray's Reef, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay Sanctuaries have hosted South African visitors and shared their day-to-day activities. Two more groups arrive in the U.S. in the coming months for visits to the Olympic Coast Sanctuary in Washington State and the Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary in Massachusetts.

South Africa will reciprocate in late fall when U.S. sanctuary staff and partners visit their colleagues to participate in three weeks of workshops and site visits designed to produce a management plan for a proposed marine protected area along the Kwazulu-Natal province coastline.

—Elizabeth Moore

## Sanctuary Advisory Council and Coordinators Meet in California

A report from the first annual Office of National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) Chairs and Education Coordinators (CCC) Meeting is now available in "Special Offerings" on the Sanctuary System's home page at <http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov>.

The February 2001 meeting in Monterey Bay, California focused on a general overview of how SACs have evolved over time and their objectives today. In the meeting, 27 participants shared site-specific accomplishments and challenges and helped identify solutions to problems that some or all SACs have in common.

A second CCC Meeting is being planned for February 2002 in the Florida Keys.

—Elizabeth Moore

## Newsplash

**Attention All Divers!** Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary sent out an "Attention All Divers" alert to ask sanctuary divers to report all sightings of *Undaria pinnatifida*, a golden brown kelp, native to the Japan Sea. The kelp has invaded waters off Australia, Europe, and New Zealand and now California. If allowed to colonize, the invasive species competes and displaces local species. Divers who spy the invasive species are asked to call Mario Tamburri at 831-647-4206.

**Olympic Coast Marine Sanctuary recently conducted a no-notice oil spill drill** to test their capabilities to meet specified time an equipment response standards.

"The spill highlighted the vulnerability of the outer coast to any type of potential spill," said Sanctuary Manager Carol Bernthal.

## The Great American Fish Count 2001

Divers and ocean communities are gearing up for the Great American Fish Count (GAFC), a yearly nationwide event initiated in 1992 by the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary.

Each year the GAFC organizers prepare volunteer divers by offering free fish identification seminars to help them when they hit the water to survey the health and habitat of local fish populations.

This year divers will explore ocean waters within several of the national marine sanctuaries: Channel Islands and Monterey Bay Sanctuaries (California), the Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary (Texas/Louisiana), Gray's Reef Sanctuary (Georgia), Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary (Massachusetts), and the Florida Keys Sanctuary.

To learn more about the Great American Fish Count, visit their home page at <http://www.fishcount.org/>.



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

**mission** To 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.

### June/July Calendar

Natural events • Blue whales and minke whales arrive in the Channel Islands Sanctuary to feed from the rich upwellings. Whales remain through September. Common murren begin nesting at Tatoosh Island, the last active nest colony site on the Washington Coast in the Olympic Coast Sanctuary. Come July, loggerhead sea turtles begin hatching from nests on Georgia's beaches and continue through October. Loggerheads Sea use Gray's Reef Sanctuary for food and as a resting site.

**June 9 - June 20** • Monitor Mission 2001 brings together NOAA, the Navy, and The Mariners' Museum for a large-scale recovery expedition at the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary. This year's mission attempts to recover the Civil War vessel's 40-ton engine and prepare the gun turret for recovery during 2002.

**July 1-31** • Great American Fish Count. Divers survey Sanctuary waters for fish diversity and abundance.

**July 7** • Sustainable Seas Expeditions Open House in the Florida Keys.

**July 16 -19** • Coastal Zone Management '01 Conference, Cleveland, Ohio.

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## Protecting the Tortugas Habitat *(Cont'd from pg. 1)*

The process to develop the reserve as a model for collaborative resource management drew accolades from the marine community. On March 8, 2001, the reserve became a reality.

"We plan to work closely with commercial fishermen to make sure they're aware of the reserve boundaries and regulations and to allow them time to remove their gear from the closed areas," said Sanctuary Superintendent Billy Causey.

The federal portion of the Tortugas Ecological Reserve includes all of Tortugas South, 60 square nautical miles containing the critical spawning grounds of Riley's Hump, and 13.8 square nautical miles in the northwest corner of Tortugas North.

In Tortugas North, the new regulations prohibit all taking of marine life, restrict vessel discharges to cooling water and engine exhaust, prohibit anchoring and prohibit use of mooring buoys by vessels more than 100 feet in combined length. The regulations allow diving and snorkeling, but they require visitors to obtain a simple no-cost, phone-in permit to ensure that all vessels have access to mooring buoys, ease enforcement and assist in monitoring visitor impacts.

Regulations for Tortugas South also prohibit the taking of marine life and restrict vessel discharges. In order to ease enforcement in this remote region, the regulations prohibit diving in Tortugas South, requiring vessels to be in continuous transit through the area keeping fishing gear stowed.

The Tortugas Ecological Reserve joins the sanctuary's network of 23 no-take areas established in 1997. (This includes one ecological reserve). The final plan is available on-line at <http://www.fknms.nos.noaa.gov/tortugas/> or by calling (305) 743-2437.

## Titanic Explorer to Survey Thunder Bay Marine Sanctuary *(Cont'd from pg. 1)*

excellent acoustic images of the Thunder Bay shipwrecks," said Ellen Brody, Manager of the Sanctuary/Preserve.

During a two-week expedition (June 8-22) to the sanctuary site off Alpena, Michigan, Dr. Ballard and his team will collect data 24 hours a day, depending on the weather. The group will use IFE's new custom-designed underwater tow sled, ECHO, to collect side-scan sonar and subbottom profiler data. Only the deepest parts of the sanctuary will be surveyed, followed by a broader regional reconnaissance survey through the remaining portions. As time and weather permits, Dr. Ballard's team will also conduct high-resolution localized surveys of the Lake Huron shipwrecks. Of the estimated 100 shipwrecks in the 448-square mile sanctuary/preserve, mariners called "Shipwreck Alley," fewer than 40 have been discovered.

To learn more about the nation's newest sanctuary, visit <http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/glsr/thunderbay/>.

**Sanctuary Watch** is a publication of NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary System, Communications and Development Branch.

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