

## 2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATED

The sanctuary celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012 with a number of events, activities and publications that reached millions of individuals. *Stellwagen Revealed*, a three-day festival in Woods Hole, brought a series of science talks, children's activities, vessel tours and an art exhibition to this East Coast nexus of oceanographic research. The program culminated with an environmental recognition award to singer/songwriter Graham Nash of the rock group Crosby, Stills and Nash. Other 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary programs included a three-credit college course at Massasoit Community College that focused on the natural resources of New England's only marine sanctuary.

### TRAVEL AND TOURISM ENCOURAGED

Partnering with NOAA Fisheries and Whale and Dolphin Conservation, a nonprofit environmental organization, the sanctuary participated in Whale SENSE, a voluntary industry program promoting responsible whale watching. In addition, a billboard on route 93 outside of Boston highlighted the importance of these animals to the sanctuary and the local economy. For the diving community, the sanctuary installed a mooring on a second dive site with the support of a local dive operation and PADI's Project Aware. The moorings at the two sunken fishing vessels offer easier and safer access to interesting and biologically-rich dive destinations.



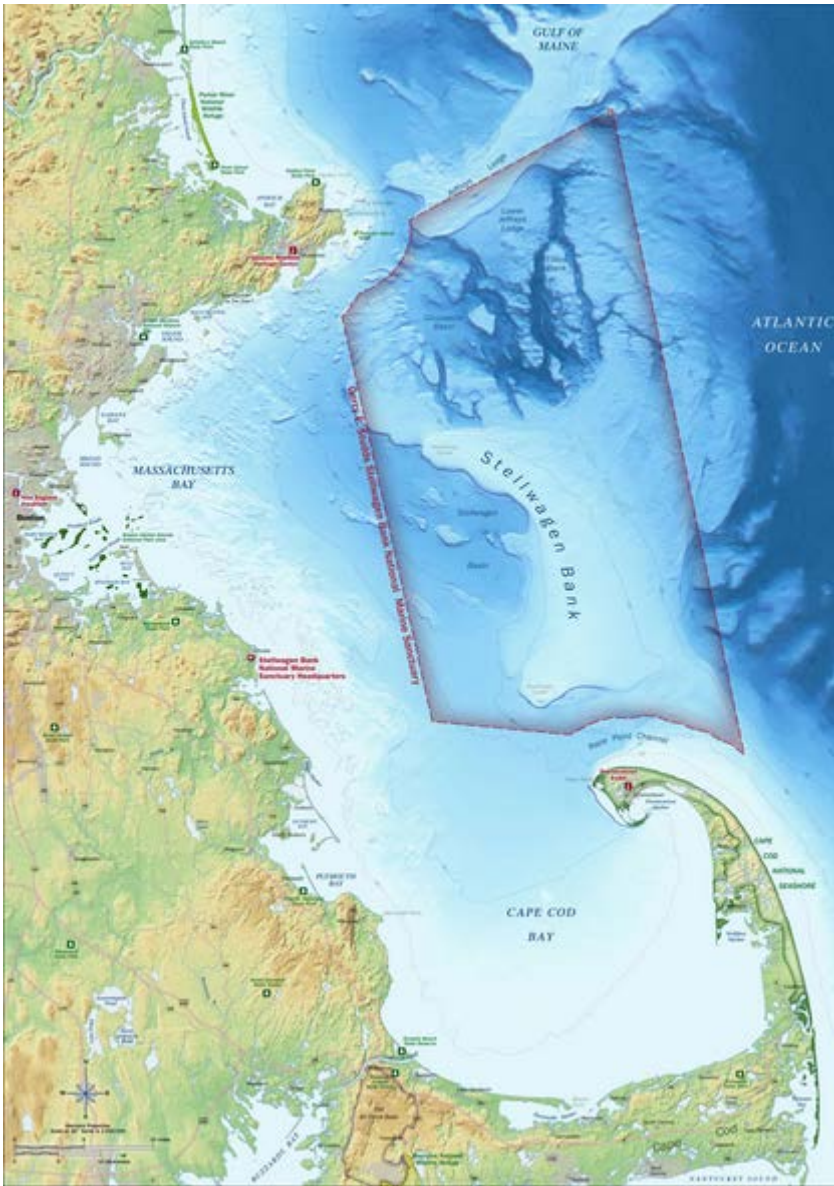
### PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESOURCE CONSERVATION

Working in collaboration with more than a dozen organizations, the sanctuary released an iPad/iPhone App called WhaleAlert. The free app, available to the public, provides mariners with a one-stop-shop for right whale information. In a related effort, the sanctuary has developed report cards for ships that use the Automatic Identification System and pass through the sanctuary. This tool provides feedback on compliance with right whale regulations and recommendations. In addition to the app and report cards, the sanctuary became a sister sanctuary to Bermuda's marine mammal sanctuary. The agreement adds a mid-migration location in a network of sanctuaries protecting the same population of endangered humpback whales.



### INCREASED KNOWLEDGE OF SANCTUARY SPECIES

Scientists in multi-institution teams have used digital acoustic tags and National Geographic Society *Crittercams* to record humpback whale underwater behaviors. Studies of North Atlantic right whale calls, ship noises and other background noise have revealed that whale communication may be reduced by about two-thirds in today's ocean environment. Sanctuary expertise in acoustic field studies, whale tagging and marine mammal policy has been increasingly utilized by NOAA and other sanctuaries.



## LOOKING AHEAD

- Partnerships are key elements in every sanctuary program, including our network of sister sanctuaries. The anticipated participation of the Dutch Antilles will further expand our North Atlantic humpback coverage area from Stellwagen Bank across the Caribbean Sea.
- A Sanctuary Ecological Research Area (SERA) **was proposed for the sanctuary** and an eastward adjoining area to provide dedicated space for scientific studies that examine fishing activity. The sanctuary is working through the New England Fisheries Management Council process to help define this research area and delineate boundaries.
- A traveling exhibit on humpback whales will open in the spring at the Mystic Aquarium while a virtual exhibit network called *Fathom That*, based on cell phone messages and a mobile website, will be activated in 2013.

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary sits at the mouth of Massachusetts Bay, just 25 miles from the busy port of Boston. The 842-square-mile sanctuary is one of the world's premiere whale watching destinations and historically important as a fishing ground. Atlantic cod, haddock, various flounders and bluefin tuna are among its treasured species. Its waters support a rich assortment of marine life, including critically endangered North Atlantic right whales. Numerous shipwrecks, representing more than 400 years of maritime travel, rest on the sanctuary seafloor.

*NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is committed to supporting lives and livelihoods across the nation and in sanctuary communities through socioeconomic research and monitoring to understand the economic and social drivers of sanctuary resources and improve management practices.*

## NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



Scale varies in this perspective. Adapted from National Geographic Maps.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a system of 14 marine protected areas encompassing 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. For more information on the National Marine Sanctuary System, visit: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>