



## ROAD TO SANCTUARY DESIGNATION



The National Marine Sanctuaries Act allows NOAA to identify, designate, and protect areas of the marine and Great Lakes environment with special national significance due to their conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, scientific, cultural, archaeological, educational, or aesthetic qualities as national marine sanctuaries.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters from Washington state to the Florida Keys, and from Lake Huron to American Samoa. The network includes a system of 15 national marine sanctuaries and Papahānaumokuākea and Rose Atoll marine national monuments.

### DESIGNATION PROCESS STEPS

NOAA identifies areas to consider for national marine sanctuary designation through the community-based Sanctuary Nomination Process. Nominations that successfully complete the process are added to an inventory of areas NOAA could consider for designation. The process for designating a new national marine sanctuary has four steps:



1

**SCOPING:** NOAA asks the public and agency partners, tribes, and other stakeholders for input on possible boundaries for a new national marine sanctuary, resources that could be protected, issues NOAA should consider, and any information that should be included in the analysis.



2

**SANCTUARY PROPOSAL:** NOAA prepares draft designation documents including a draft management plan, a draft environmental impact statement that analyzes a range of alternatives, proposed regulations, and proposed boundaries. NOAA may also form an advisory council to help inform the proposal and focus stakeholder participation.



3

**PUBLIC REVIEW:** The public, agency partners, tribes, and other stakeholders provide input on the draft documents. NOAA considers all input and determines appropriate changes.



4

**SANCTUARY DESIGNATION:** NOAA makes a final decision and prepares final documents. Before the designation becomes effective, the governor reviews the documents. Congress also has the opportunity to review the documents.

# SANCTUARY SYSTEM BY THE NUMBERS

**622,972**

**SQUARE MILES** of protected area in the National Marine Sanctuary System

Number of federally **ENDANGERED** species

**35**

Number of National Marine Sanctuary System **VOLUNTEER HOURS** contributed in 2023



**74,366**

Number of federally **THREATENED** species

**23**

SANCTUARIES GENERATE **\$4 BILLION** ANNUALLY IN LOCAL ECONOMIES

Number of federally **PROTECTED** marine mammal species

**43**



Number of teachers, lifelong learners and students

**REACHED**

**194,019**

**430**

Number of known shipwrecks and sunken aircraft protected in the National Marine Sanctuary System



**415** Sanctuary Advisory Council **MEMBERS**

**200**

Number of research

**PARTNERS**



Year National Marine Sanctuary System was **ESTABLISHED**

