



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
**NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE**  
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**MEMORANDUM FOR:** John Armor  
Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

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Date: 2018.09.20 10:42:52 -04'00'

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**SUBJECT:** Completion of Evaluation of Sanctuary Management Plan

Pursuant to section 304(e) of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA; 16 U.S.C. § 1434(e)), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS), Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) staff conducted an evaluation of the progress made toward implementing the Stellwagen Bank Sanctuary Final Management Plan published in 2010. Sanctuary staff also considered the prioritization of management goals. Based on this review, ONMS has determined that no urgent or immediate revisions to the management plan or the regulations are needed at this time. This evaluation demonstrates the sustained relevance of the goals, objectives, and priorities of the existing management plan.

#### Background

The 2010 SBNMS management plan<sup>1</sup> was the product of a multi-year process with extensive public involvement. The management plan is comprised of action plans and was developed with a five to ten year planning horizon. National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA) section 304(e) requires NOAA to review sanctuary management plans at intervals not exceeding five years (16 USC 1434(e)). Specifically, NOAA must (1) evaluate the substantive progress toward implementing the management plan and goals for the sanctuary; (2) include a prioritization of management objectives; and (3) revise the management plan and regulations as necessary to fulfill the purposes and policies of the NMSA.

#### Result of Evaluation

In fall 2016, SBNMS staff reviewed the substantive progress made in implementing the action plans designed to address the six priority issues identified in the 2010 SBNMS Management Plan. The result of this evaluation can be found in a spreadsheet populated by staff that records the level of completion for each of the strategies in the management plan.

The spreadsheet accompanies this memo and is summarized below. Note that there is some overlap between partially completed and ongoing strategies, so the total combined

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<sup>1</sup> <https://stellwagen.noaa.gov/management/fmp/fmp2010.html>

number of strategies in each category may be higher than the number of strategies in each action plan.

The current management plan is organized into four themes, each subdivided into action plans:

1. Capacity building (four action plans)  
Of the 33 strategies in these action plans, 17 were completed, six were partially completed, and 24 are ongoing. Notable achievements include the establishment of the SBNMS volunteer program in 2012 that now provides more than 1,000 hours each year by more than 150 volunteers to expand the sanctuary's reach, making progress toward mission-ready capacity through development of a strong partnership with the Office of Law Enforcement, and preparing for development of the Marine Operations Center.
2. Ecosystem protection (three action plans)  
Of the 24 strategies in these action plans, three were completed, nine were partially completed, and 14 are ongoing. SBNMS has concentrated on building monitoring and research programs, including development of strong partnerships with sister agencies, universities, and other organizations.
3. Marine mammal protection (three action plans)  
Of the 23 strategies in these action plans, 14 were completed, eight were partially completed, and 16 are ongoing. Some highlights include the use of Dtags<sup>2</sup> to understand underwater behavior of endangered whales better, including their interactions with prey and habitat, and the development of a mobile app that provides mariners with real-time information about the presence of endangered right whales along with information about required speed and management programs. In addition, the Sister Sanctuary Program was expanded and now provides joint research, monitoring, and conservation of humpback whales from their wintering habitat in the Caribbean with the summer habitats in the eastern and western Atlantic.
4. Maritime heritage management (one action plan)  
Of the 20 strategies in this action plan, six were completed, six were partially completed, and 13 are ongoing. Of note is the exploration and documentation of historic shipwrecks, including listing of six sites (comprising seven wrecks) on the National Register of Historic Places.

Since the publication of the 2010 management plan, SBNMS has made significant progress in implementing the strategies associated with these action plans. Almost 70 percent of the strategies have been completed or partially completed. This means that most of the action plans contain strategies that were not completed and would benefit from further efforts. This lack of completion does not indicate that the goals and objectives of the management plan have lost relevance. Rather, a large number of

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<sup>2</sup> DTAGs are miniature sound and movement recording tags designed for use on marine animals. See <https://www.soundtags.org/dtags/>

strategies are designed to be ongoing (e.g., monitoring programs, collaborative management, education programs, etc.), so while they were successfully implemented they cannot be considered "completed."

The human and environmental setting has not changed significantly since 2010, and most strategies would appropriately continue as prioritized in the 2010 management plan. All four themes are still highly relevant and SBNMS will continue to pursue strategies to address them. The evaluation showed that the action plans of the 2010 management plan accurately reflect the current management priorities and resource protection issues for SBNMS and are adequate to continue guiding SBNMS operations and programs for the foreseeable future. SBNMS staff has already started working on a new condition report with partners. A subcommittee of the sanctuary advisory council (SAC) has started looking at potential future priorities to be explored during the next periodic management plan review. Overall, while revision would be appropriate to remove the 70 percent of completed strategies from the plan, there is no urgent or immediate need for revision because the remaining strategies continue to be pursued and the four management themes and underlying action plans all continue to be relevant for guiding operations and programs into the foreseeable future. No new or different strategies or themes have been identified during this evaluation. The aforementioned SAC subcommittee will help identify whether any new priorities should be established in the future.

As such, revisions at this time are not urgently needed and can be revisited during the next periodic evaluation that will follow completion of the new condition report and the SAC subcommittee's recommendations.

#### Conclusion

The completion of this evaluation of the 2010 SBNMS management plan satisfies the requirements of NMSA section 304(e). Based upon this review, no urgent or immediate revisions to the management plan or to the regulations are needed at this time. NOAA will use this evaluation and an updated condition report as the management and scientific information basis to undertake the next periodic management plan review. The result of this evaluation was shared with the SAC management plan subcommittee at its meeting on May 4, 2018.

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Approved as written   x    
Denied \_\_\_\_\_

Approved with modifications (See below) \_\_\_\_\_  
Request for additional information \_\_\_\_\_

John Armor / FOR  
John Armor  
Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

09/28/2018  
Date



Objective	Strategy	Implementation Status 2010				Implementation Status 2016			
		A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
		A=Completed	B=Partially completed	C= Ongoing	D= No Action	A=Completed	B=Partially completed	C= Ongoing	D= No Action
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b>									
	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b>								
ADMIN 1 Strengthen Site Staffing and Program Support Capabilities	(1.1) Integrate staff capabilities with program needs. (1.2) Hire additional staff and streamline organizational structure. (1.3) Enhance operation of the SAC.	1	1	1		1	1		
ADMIN 2 Maintain and Further Develop Site Infrastructure	(2.1) Maintain and acquire vessels as necessary. (2.2) Work with NMSP to develop and implement a long-range facilities plan. (2.3) Maintain a database for sanctuary permitting. (2.4) Maintain and enhance a SBNMS diving program. (2.5) Develop an effective enforcement program.	1		1		1		1	
ADMIN 3 Develop a SBNMS Volunteer Program that Leverages Sanctuary Programs and Increases Site Visibility	(3.1) Develop SBNMS volunteer program. (3.2) Maintain and Expand the SBNMS Volunteer Diver Corps activities. (3.3) Develop and support international exchange of volunteers between SBNMS and other MPAs.	1		1		1		1	
	<b>Sub-total</b>	7	1	3	0	7	1	7	0
	<b>INTERAGENCY COORDINATION</b>								
IC.1 Facilitate Cooperation and Coordination Between Agencies	(1.1) Re-establish discussions regarding a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among SBNMS, NOAA Fisheries NERO and the NEFMC to facilitate cooperation and coordination. (1.2) Coordinate proposed activities with the NOAA Fisheries Service NERO (1.3) Facilitate cooperative research and outreach between SBNMS and the NOAA Fisheries Service NEFSC (1.4) Evaluate the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and NOAA Fisheries Service for commenting on proposed activities occurring at the Massachusetts Bay Disposal Site (MBDS).	1		1		1		1	
IC.2 Establish Mechanisms for Improving Information Sharing	(2.1) Provide information via the web on the responsibilities and activities of multiple agencies with roles pertinent to the SBNMS. (2.2) Provide regular updates to the USCG Area Contingency Plans. (2.3) Establish a mechanism for informal consultation with the EPA, NEFMC, MWRA, MADEP and MACZM Office on water quality issues. (2.4) Update and continue to implement the sanctuary Cooperative Enforcement Program. (2.5) Support continued meetings of the advisory council's Interagency Cooperation Working Group. (2.6) Participate in the GoM Council and other regional initiatives. (2.7) Participate on relevant advisory panels of the NEFMC. (2.8) Depict Sanctuary boundaries in fishery management plans and related documents.	1	1			1	1	1	1
	<b>Sub-total</b>	6	1	2	3	4	4	9	3
	<b>PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION</b>								
	(1.1) Produce public outreach products and programs that best address sanctuary visibility needs.	1				1		1	





MMVS 1 Reduce the Risk of Vessel Strike Between Large Commercial Ships and Whales	(1.1) Consult with NOAA Fisheries on their proposed strategy to reduce ship strike to North Atlantic right whales and evaluate how such measures would affect the sanctuary.	1							1				1			
	(1.2) Develop, demonstrate and evaluate the SBNNMS Information and Reporting Center.												1			
	(1.3) Determine the conservation benefit of reconfiguring the existing Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) within the sanctuary to reduce the risk of ship strike to whales.	1												1		
	(2.1) Institute year-round voluntary speed restrictions for all vessels operating in the sanctuary.													1		
	(3.1) Work with NOAA Fisheries Service to support their ongoing database of all known vessel strikes in and around the sanctuary.	1												1		
MMVS 2 Reduce the Risk of Vessel Strike Through Speed Restrictions	(3.2) Work with NOAA Fisheries Service to institute a toll free number to enable callers to anonymously report vessel strikes in the sanctuary.													1		
	(3.3) Investigate research strategies to determine responses of whales to approaching vessels.	1												1		
	(3.4) Conduct year-round monitoring to identify type, size, speed, and route of vessels in the sanctuary.	1												1		
	(3.5) Investigate use of forward-looking sonar or other real-time detection technologies.													1		
	<b>Sub-total</b>		14	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	10	1	16	3		
<b>BEHAVIORAL DISTURBANCE Total</b>																
MARITIME HERITAGE MANAGEMENT																
	MHR 1 Establish a MHR Program	(1.1) Develop the foundation and infrastructure for a MH program and integrate the MH program into existing sanctuary programs.	1												1	
		(1.2) Identify and pursue additional sources of funding beyond the ONMS.	1												1	
		(1.3) Identify and form partnerships, relationships, and MOU with entities that have specialized knowledge and abilities that support the documentation and interpretation of the sanctuary's MH.													1	
	MHR 2 Inventory, Assess and Characterize MHR	(2.1) Characterize prehistoric and historic use patterns to assist with the location of historical resources through the identification and collection of historical, archaeological, and anthropological documentation.											1			
		(2.2) Conduct systematic field surveys to locate, identify, and inventory historical resources.											1			
		(2.3) Assess historical resources for their NRHP eligibility and nominate appropriate sites to the NRHP.	1												1	
		(2.4) Characterize historical resources within the SBNNMS.													1	
		(3.1) Implement a management system that protects historical resources while allowing for uses compatible with resource protection.													1	
	MHR 3 Protect and Manage MHR	(3.2) Implement an assessment protocol to assign sanctuary historical resources to the appropriate category.													1	
		(3.3) Identify partnerships and relationships for site monitoring and compliance of historical resource permits and regulations.	1												1	
		(3.4) Develop and implement an interpretive enforcement program.	1												1	
		(3.5) Develop and implement a mooring system on historical resources in collaboration with affected parties, regional recreational SCUBA diving organizations, and regional SCLIBA diving charter operators.												1		
		(3.6) Implement the ONMS Permitting Guidelines for archaeological research (i.e., survey and inventory permit and archaeological research permit).													1	
		(3.7) Develop and implement collection and conservation policies for artifacts previously recovered from SBNNMS before and after designation.														1
																1

MHR.4 Develop and Implement a MHR Outreach and Education Program	(4.1) Identify and partner with regional organizations to conduct MH exhibits and other outreach programs.							1			1								
	(4.2) Develop and implement an artifact documentation and curation program through partnerships and relationships with local or regional maritime museums.																		
	(5.1) Establish an inventory of shipwrecks and submerged objects, inside and outside of SBNMS boundaries that may pose environmental threats to resources.																		
	(5.2) Coordinate information exchanges pertaining to shipwrecks and other submerged objects as environmental threats with NOAA's HAZMAT division and the ONMS for the development of the SHIELDS and RUST database systems.																		
MHR.5 Assess Shipwrecks and Other Submerged Objects for Potential Hazards	(5.3) Identify shipwrecks and other submerged objects to be examined with remote sensing technology and report findings to state and federal trustees.																		
	(5.4) Establish a monitoring program for shipwreck and submerged objects that have been located and are considered a threat to SBNMS. Develop protocols for site evaluation and a timeline for future site monitoring.																		
	(6.1) Disseminate information about modern shipwrecks.																		
	(6.2) Develop and implement a mooring system on modern shipwrecks in collaboration with affected parties, regional recreational SCUBA diving organizations, and regional SCUBA diving charter operators																		
MHR.6 Facilitate Access to Modern Shipwrecks																			
<b>Sub-total</b>																			