

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary



Photo: Robert Steelquist, NOAA

The sanctuary represents one of North America's most spectacular undeveloped coastlines.



Photo: Elizabeth Weinberg, NOAA

The high energy shoreline of the Olympic Coast creates diverse communities of intertidal marine life.



Photo: NOAA

Human presence on the Olympic Coast predates historical records and attests to Native American cultures' long and intricate relationship with the marine environment.

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

(OCNMS) is one of our nation's most treasured areas, spanning 3,188 square miles of marine waters off the rugged Olympic Peninsula coastline. The sanctuary extends 25 to 40 miles seaward, covering much of the continental shelf and several major submarine canyons. OCNMS protects a productive upwelling zone home to marine mammal and seabird faunas, diverse populations of kelp and intertidal algae, and thriving invertebrate communities. Visitors can explore 48 miles of wilderness beaches and dramatic, rocky shoreline with tidepools, offshore islands and seastacks. Birders will find large colonies of seabirds such as common murre, tufted puffins and one of the largest populations of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. During annual migrations, more than a million seabirds, waterfowl and shorebirds travel along the coast. Twenty-nine species of marine mammals reside in or migrate through OCNMS. Orca and gray whales, sea otters, harbor seals, and Steller and California sea lions can be spotted from land. Other whales, including humpback whales, can only be seen from boats as they feed miles offshore. The cold, temperate waters of the Olympic Coast are some of the most productive fish-growing habitats in the world. Seven species of salmon, along with halibut, rockfish, herring, sturgeon and other fish species support important commercial fisheries.

OCNMS is also rich in cultural resources, with over 200 documented historical shipwrecks and the vibrant contemporary cultures of the Quinault Indian Nation and Makah, Quileute and Hoh Indian tribes. Visitors can learn more about sanctuary resources, science and conservation, and opportunities to explore this wilderness coast by visiting Olympic Coast Discovery Center in Port Angeles.

Research and Monitoring

The diversity and richness of marine resources provide exceptional opportunities for scientific research. OCNMS conducts an active program of physical oceanographic, geologic, marine archaeological and biological research, most of which is accomplished through partnerships and coordination with other federal, tribal and state agencies, as well as universities and private research organizations.

Education and Outreach

OCNMS teams with the National Park Service to provide visitors with on-site interpretive programs. The sanctuary also works with Quinault, Makah, Quileute and Hoh tribes to develop nature-based tourism programs. The sanctuary helps local school districts create marine science programs based on field investigations, intertidal monitoring and marine debris surveys. Interpretive signs, kiosks, publications, a website, social media and public presentations promote sanctuary goals and awareness.



Photo: NOAA

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary includes 3,188 square miles of marine waters off the rugged Olympic Peninsula coastline.



Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

Location

From Cape Flattery to the mouth of the Copalis River, on Washington's outer coast

Protected Area

3,188 square miles

Designation

July 1994

Habitats

Intertidal zone
Kelp forests
Open ocean
Rocky reefs
Seafloor

Key Species

Deep-sea corals
Gray whale
Northern sea otter
Orca whale
Tufted Puffin

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM

Olympic Coast

- Greater Farallones
- Cordell Bank
- Papahānaumokuākea
- Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale
- Monterey Bay
- Channel Islands
- American Samoa (U.S.)
(Including Rose Atoll)



- Wisconsin - Lake Michigan
- Thunder Bay
- Stellwagen Bank
- Mallows Bay - Potomac River
- Monitor
- Gray's Reef
- Florida Keys
- Flower Garden Banks

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

- National Marine Sanctuary
- Marine National Monument
- Proposed National Marine Sanctuary

Find Us

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On the Web

Email: olympiccoast@noaa.gov
<https://www.facebook.com/usolympiccoastgov>
Twitter: @olympiccoast

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Network of marine protected areas
Encompasses more than 600,000 square miles
Established October 1972

On the Web

sanctuaries.noaa.gov
www.facebook.com/NOAAOfficeofNationalMarineSanctuaries
Instagram: @noaasanctuaries
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Tumblr: @noaasanctuaries



Photo: NOAA

Sea lions can often be found hauled out on rocky outcroppings or even buoys.



Photo: NOAA

More than 56 species of seabirds and 24 species of shorebirds can be found in the sanctuary, like the common murre.



Photo: NOAA

The orca whale is one of the most common toothed whales in Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.

<http://olympiccoast.noaa.gov/>