

2012 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit: *Key Messages, Preliminary Recommendations and Council Next Steps*

The 2012 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit built on two previous forums that focused on building a larger coalition of support for the National Marine Sanctuary System, and fostered discussions related to furthering marine protected area engagement with the recreation, travel and tourism industries. This document summarizes the key messages and recommendations reported during the meeting, and highlights next steps proposed by national marine sanctuary advisory council representatives for vetting and supporting these recommendations.

The First of Its Kind

The 2012 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit was conducted as an in-person meeting on December 4-6, 2012, in Santa Cruz, California, at the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center. This internal meeting followed two previous forums (conducted via webinar and conference call) that focused on building a larger coalition of support for the National Marine Sanctuary System, and included representation from twelve of the fourteen national marine sanctuary advisory councils.

The central theme of the 2012 Summit was to further marine protected area engagement with the recreation, travel and tourism industries. It aligned perfectly with subcommittee discussions and panel presentations at the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee Meeting, which was conducted simultaneously in Santa Cruz (Hotel Paradox). Advisory council representatives joined members of the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee, and associated staff from NOAA, DOI and other relevant agencies, on December 5, 2012, to discuss how marine protected areas should showcase their value and expand their reach to business communities. Broad-scale discussions during this nearly full day of overlap, as well as sessions illustrating the socioeconomic value of marine protected areas, led advisory council representatives to identify specific actions that they would consider raising at future council meetings and addressing via various pathways, such as public/private partnerships and cross-council commitments.

Consistent with past meetings, the 2012 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit furthered ongoing communications and information exchange among advisory councils and with staff of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS). It also provided an opportunity for ONMS staff to hear firsthand from citizen leaders – representing various user groups, government agencies and the public at large, about the purpose and value of marine protected areas and offer meaningful suggestions on balancing conservation, resource protection and a suite of ocean uses. The interaction of national marine sanctuary advisory council representatives and the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee was the first of its kind, and a great step toward engaging two groups with common goals but varied scales and perspectives.

Experiencing and Projecting the *Value of Place*

As a follow-on to the previous two phases (i.e., webinar and conference call), this in-person meeting re-introduced advisory council representatives to the ONMS *Campaign of Engagement* and ongoing efforts to highlight the critical role of sanctuaries in promoting strong, local economies and conserving resources for future generations. Presentations and interactive, exhibit experiences on December 4-5, 2012, provided participants with opportunities to

enhance their understanding of the value and purpose of national marine sanctuaries and identify themes integral to engaging business communities. Case studies from across the National Marine Sanctuary System subsequently illustrated how businesses are integral to the fabric that makes up sanctuary communities and the significance of engaging these entities for the purposes of creating, protecting, and investing more in special ocean places.

With a better understanding of why ONMS depends on business communities to contribute to the vibrancy of national marine sanctuaries and promote overall ocean health, participants were armed for learning more about how they could broadcast the importance of a healthy ocean to the public at large. Additional presentations highlighting the need for relevance (regardless of the target audience) and earning and meeting the expectations of a “destination” brand charged advisory council representatives and ONMS staff participants for identifying actions specific to growing support for the National Marine Sanctuary System and individual sanctuaries.

Engaging Advisory Councils in Expanding Our Reach

Armed with a better understanding of the value of national marine sanctuaries, advisory council representatives identified, through a facilitated discussion, tangible, near-term outcomes with the potential to foster a larger coalition of support for the National Marine Sanctuary System. Initial suggestions were vetted and grouped into seven results-oriented recommendations, each with potential roles for national marine sanctuary advisory councils.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Collaborate with Chambers of Commerce, Visitor Bureaus, Travel Advisory Boards, Trade Associations and other public-private partnerships to begin relaying to various constituencies or user groups the value of national marine sanctuaries.
2. Engage youth, from elementary to post-college students, to redefine sanctuaries as “cool” places for education, outreach and professional opportunities.
3. Collaborate with other protected areas (e.g., NPS, USFWS) to develop intragovernmental relationships, leverage existing resources, and brand similar areas.
4. Diversify the ONMS constituent base by targeting audiences by cultural (e.g., coastal treaty tribes) and demographic (e.g., youth, 50-somethings) groups, and determine how this change will increase tourism (e.g., new seat on advisory council).
5. Increase positive interactions with recreational fishermen and communities, as well as other specific sectors of the community.
6. Assess liabilities, competing interests, and other difficulties to determine how these may be turned into assets that are leveraged for multiple “goods”.
7. Consider re-examining the composition of advisory councils to determine whether they work well with regard to the *Campaign of Engagement* and the respective audiences that ONMS is attempting to engage.

After reflecting on these recommendations, advisory council representatives and ONMS staff participants recognized the importance of advancing relationships with Chambers of Commerce and Visitors Bureaus, and refined the first broad-scale recommendation into a series of practical actions. These actions were aimed at attracting more visitors

to national marine sanctuaries, where appropriate, and instilling behavioral changes (e.g., rules of engagement) to promote long-term sustainability of these ocean communities. After all, sanctuaries are places to live, work, and play!

Fostering Support through Recreation, Travel and Tourism

Building on this momentum, advisory council representatives and Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee members met in small discussion groups the following day and identified feasible, results-oriented action items for building and enhancing engagement with the travel, tourism and recreation industries. Each group collectively identified a key recreation and tourism constituency (e.g., recreational users, coastal communities, foreign visitors) and specific strategies for better engaging this audience with marine protected areas. Audiences selected during discussions and a brief synopsis of emerging recommendations for each is provided in a separate document, titled *Expanding the Reach of Marine Protected Areas through Recreation and Tourism: Synopsis of Recommended Audiences and Actions*, developed to assist marine protected area managers and their partners with connecting people to the ocean through sustainable recreation and tourism.

Taking Action

The 2012 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit concluded on December 6, 2012, with advisory council representatives making verbal commitments to raise one or more actions, or recommendations, to their full council for the purpose of building or growing connections between sanctuaries and recreation, travel and tourism industries. A summary of the proposed commitments to be considered by advisory councils is provided below. They will be used by ONMS and advisory council members to assess next steps for fostering greater support and resources for America's underwater treasures.

PROPOSED COMMITMENTS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- Evaluate advisory council composition and membership through the lens of expanding your reach through recreation, travel and tourism, and consider adding or replacing seats to fulfill missing connections (e.g., college seat, tourism seat).
- Encourage local tourism authorities to include ex-officio seats on their advisory boards for representatives from respective national marine sanctuaries.
- Establish advisory council working groups specific to the needs of the national marine sanctuary, especially with respect to engaging recreation, travel and tourism industries.
- Encourage all advisory council members and alternates to engage the business community and follow-up on existing and potential business relationships.
- Engage business, travel, and tourism-related advisory council representatives to increase awareness, visibility and visitation to national marine sanctuaries.
- Contact local hospitality establishments (e.g., hotels, bed and breakfasts) to develop mutually beneficial strategies.
- Revitalize discussions and invest in public/private partnerships to assist with the development of additional visitor centers for the National Marine Sanctuary System.

- Leverage existing connections and partnerships (e.g., national seashores, national parks, America's Cup) to further engage and promote national marine sanctuaries.
- Promote efforts to enhance working relationships with waterfront authorities.
- Identify similarities and work to establish useful connections among other national marine sanctuaries (e.g., Channel Islands' connection to Olympic Coast through Chumash "journey").
- Conduct preliminary assessments and marketing reviews to facilitate branding, or re-branding, of specific national marine sanctuaries.
- Examine the possibility of linking other local community access channels with Access Monterey Peninsula (AMP) Community Television (i.e., *Your Sanctuary* program).
- Promote or establish ways for encouraging responsible recreation and tourism to national marine sanctuaries (e.g., certification programs).
- Solicit sponsorship from local businesses to support national marine sanctuaries.
- Improve the dissemination of information to constituents such that messages are clear, concise and accurate.
- Support or develop film festivals that illustrate and visit national marine sanctuaries throughout a region.

Moving Forward

The additional knowledge, insights and recommendations outlined during the 2012 National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Summit further equipped advisory council representatives and the ONMS with the tools necessary for building mutually beneficial relationships with business communities. Future actions by advisory councils and the ONMS are necessary steps for fostering greater support for special ocean places and sustaining viable coastal communities. Through their concerted efforts, national marine sanctuaries will continue to play a critical role in promoting strong, local economies; preserving cultural connections to the ocean; protecting public health; and conserving resources for future generations.