

OLYMPIC COAST NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Photo: OCNMIS

Sanctuary Reports on Status and Trends of Marine Resources

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary completed its “condition report” in 2008, a comprehensive document that assesses the health of the sanctuary’s resources. The report provided a summary of the pressures and trends on the site’s water quality, habitats, living resources and maritime archaeological resources, and the sanctuary’s responses to those pressures. Overall, the report indicated that sanctuary resources appear to be in good to fair condition. Water quality appears good, while some habitats show disturbance from decades of bottom contact fishing gear use; however, protected areas were created recently to help reduce this pressure. Seabird, marine mammal and fish populations are lower than historical levels, and threats to sanctuary archaeological resources come from unauthorized salvage, fishing gear impacts and natural environmental processes. The report provides important background and supporting material for the sanctuary’s ongoing management plan review.

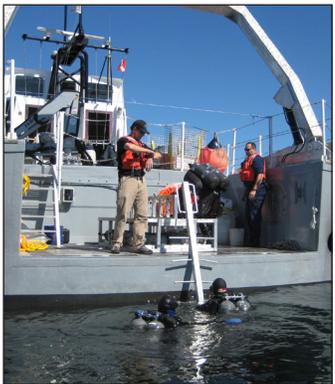


Photo: OCNMIS

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Navigates Management Plan Review Process

The first phase of revising the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan was completed in 2008 with the close of the initial public comment period for the next management plan. The sanctuary received over 500 comments during public meetings in late September and early October, and received another 650 comments via e-mail and letters from non-profit organizations, agencies, tribes, stakeholder groups and individuals. Once the comments are sorted, prioritized and analyzed, the sanctuary will begin developing action plans with the help of the sanctuary advisory council, Intergovernmental Policy Council, partners and the public. The two-year process results in many opportunities for public input, and eventually, a working document to guide the sanctuary over the next five to 10 years.



Photo: OCNMIS

Ocean Science Workshop Trains Teachers in Ocean Literacy

Fourth- and fifth-grade teachers from Olympic Coast communities participated in a unique workshop conducted by educators from Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary and the Seattle Aquarium. The Ocean Science workshop better prepares teachers to lead an inquiry-based, marine science-rich experience necessary to improve students’ grasp of basic science skills and to help them understand the ocean and its stewardship. In addition to the training, sanctuary and aquarium staff provide participating schools with support for field trips to local beaches, field trips to the Seattle Aquarium or Olympic Coast Discovery Center, and workshops for parents to improve their skills as field trip chaperones. Seattle Aquarium’s Ocean Science program partners with Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary and is funded by a five-year NOAA Environmental Literacy Grant.



Sanctuary maps available at sanctuaries.noaa.gov

Sanctuary Participates in “Worst Case” Oil Spill Drill

In May 2008, the sanctuary was the site of a hypothetical “worst case” oil spill, with staff joining a two-day, table-top oil spill drill with a scenario that involved a large volume spill in the sanctuary and the Makah Indian Nation’s usual and accustomed fishing grounds. This scenario provided an opportunity to practice expanding the Unified Command under the U.S. Coast Guard to include sanctuary Superintendent Carol Bernthal and a Makah Tribal Council representative, as well as consideration of alternative response actions. The drill gave responders a better understanding of challenges of responding to an oil spill on a remote coastline and the unique concerns and requirements for a spill in a tribal “usual and accustomed” area. Exxon-Mobil, which sponsored the drill, brought in their North American Regional Response Team – about 100 individuals – to establish and staff various command post functions. Sanctuary staff attended and worked closely with Exxon-Mobil, state agencies, tribal representatives, and other federal agencies in the Environmental Unit, Joint Information Center, Unified Command, and the Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Evaluation teams.

To learn more about these and other accomplishments, visit sanctuaries.noaa.gov

