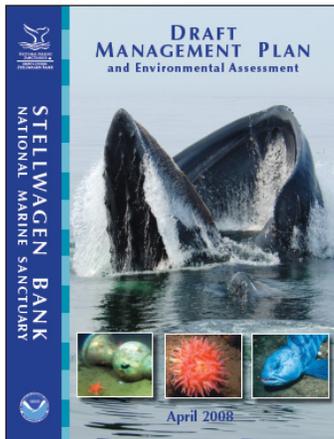


# STELLWAGEN BANK

## NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

2008 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### Draft Management Plan Release Generates More than 25,000 Public Comments

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary's draft management plan, released in May 2008, attracted great interest and generated numerous responses. A total of 25,400 comments were received at the sanctuary during the open comment period, which stretched from May 6 – Oct. 3, 2008. Comments came from all 50 states, two U.S. territories and 48 foreign nations, indicating that protecting our national marine sanctuaries and the health of the ocean is a concern for all Americans and people worldwide. Sanctuary staff members are now reading all of the correspondence and summarizing the comments. Upon completion of the review process, the management plan team will refine the plan, incorporating new information and making changes as needed. Official NOAA responses to each identified issue will appear in the final management plan along with a copy of each comment. Expected release date for the final management plan is mid-to-late 2009.

### Whale Tagging Research Continues with Successful Summer Season

With 16 tagged whales and 97 hours of data, 2008 was a very successful year for the Stellwagen Bank sanctuary's whale tagging project. Using the NOAA vessel *Nancy Foster* as the main ship allowed the sanctuary's 50-foot research vessel *Auk* to dedicate its time to additional mapping, research and support for the tagging efforts. One of the year's special accomplishments was tagging multiple animals in the same foraging group to investigate cooperative feeding. Two pairs of feeding whales were tagged, and the underwater tracks and vocalizations of these whales will be studied to better understand how whales work together to catch prey. The sanctuary led an impressive slate of research partners in the project, including Duke University, Harvard University, Penn State University, the University of New Hampshire, the Whale Center of New England, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and NOAA Fisheries.



Photo: NOAA

### Automatic Identification System Finds Application in Whale Protection

The Automatic Identification System (AIS) was designed to reduce the risk of collisions between ships, but in 2008, Stellwagen Bank sanctuary scientists realized it could be useful in another important role – whale conservation. Not only can ship traffic in whale foraging areas be quantified, but new capabilities allow the system to transmit immediate warning notices to ships about locations of endangered right whales. NOAA researchers working with the U.S. Coast Guard discovered that AIS could broadcast alerts to nearby ships when right whales are detected by new acoustic buoys in shipping lanes. Notified vessel captains can then take immediate action to avoid hitting the animals. This program is being piloted with vessels accessing two liquefied natural gas ports near the sanctuary, and may find application with other types of ships and in other coastal locations around the nation.



Photo: NOAA

### Sea Debris Initiative Expands, Joins Forces with Partners

The Sea Debris Initiative has become active in Scituate and Provincetown, Mass., where local fishermen are encouraged to remove hazardous derelict fishing gear from the Stellwagen Bank sanctuary

seafloor and deposit it in shoreside trash bins. Converging with the sanctuary's efforts this year was a recycling effort developed by Covanta Energy Corp. called "Fishing for Energy." The company, in partnership with NOAA, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Schnitzer Steel Industries, provides cost-free dumpsters at key fishing ports. In Oct. 2008, a recycling bin was established on Provincetown's MacMillan Wharf, providing local fishermen with another convenient place to dispose of debris that would otherwise be a threat to sanctuary resources and active fishing efforts. Derelict gear deposited in this dumpster will be converted into energy after it is shipped to the waste treatment facility.

### Sanctuary Scientist Featured in JASON Project Curriculum

The 2008 JASON Project curriculum entitled "Operation: Resilient Planet" featured sanctuary ocean acoustics specialist Dr. Leila Hatch in a section that focused on protecting the biosphere. The mission for Leila and the student aquanauts is to "defend the Earth's biodiversity through personal action and community involvement." Subject areas covered in this unit included sound fields, sound in water, and monitoring the oceans and atmosphere. Sanctuary efforts to detect whales, particularly critically endangered North Atlantic right whales, using acoustic methods are covered in the curriculum.

### 110th Anniversary of the Steamship *Portland's* Loss Remembered

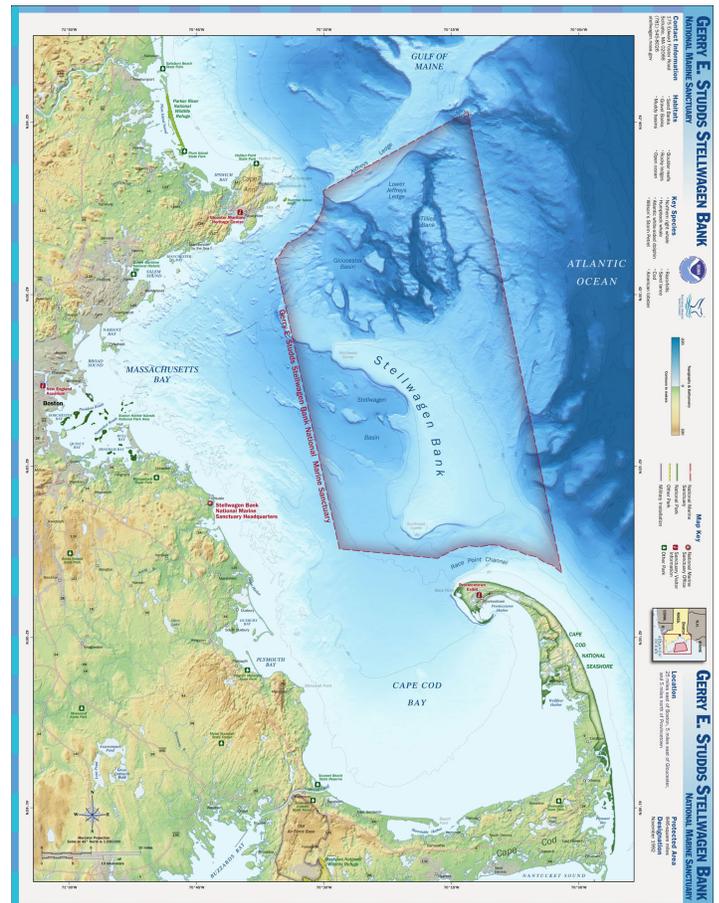
Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the National Park Service's Cape Cod National Seashore commemorated the 110th anniversary of the steamship *Portland's* loss with an event to reconnect Cape Codders to their maritime heritage. The day-long event was held at several locations on Cape Cod, including the Highland Museum and Lighthouse, where for many years people believed the light keeper had heard the *Portland's* final steam whistle blast. Amateur radio enthusiasts helped spread the *Portland's* story across the airwaves by broadcasting from the Highland Light Keeper's House. Nearly 200 passengers and crew perished on Nov. 27, 1898, when the steamship sank in deep water off Cape Ann. In remembrance of these lost souls, the event revived a wreath laying ceremony that had taken place for nearly 50 years. Sanctuary research has revised and revived the *Portland's* story, and the shipwreck is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a testament to its historical and archaeological significance to New England.

### Sanctuary Expands Exhibit at Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center

The sanctuary's exhibit at the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center added additional space this year, with new sections showcasing mapping techniques over the past two centuries, and satellite views of the earth. Additional content covers plankton distribution, fish diversity and seafloor habitats. Sanctuary exhibit growth resulted from the expansion of the center, including construction of a new wing that will focus on the Gloucester fishing community.

### Massasoit Community College Partners with Sanctuary to Offer Marine Technology and Careers Course

A special survey course in the Massasoit Community College's Marine Technology and Technician Series was offered this past fall at the sanctuary's meeting annex, attracting a full house, ranging from retirees to high school students. Sanctuary staff members discussed their roles in the sanctuary, ongoing research projects at this site and elsewhere in the sanctuary system, and types of marine technology used in the field. The mini-course, offered free of charge, gave perspectives on present trends and future directions in marine research, monitoring and exploration. Staff discussed various career opportunities and levels of training and education needed to successfully enter the job market. The course will be offered again next fall.



Sanctuary maps available at [sanctuaries.noaa.gov](http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov)

To learn more about these and other accomplishments, visit [sanctuaries.noaa.gov](http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov)

