



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
OFFICE OF OCEAN AND COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear MPA.gov Readers,

The National MPA Center has seen some expressions of public concern both in formal comments and in the blogosphere about the proposed nomination of a few existing MPAs to the National System of MPAs. The public comment period that closed on February 22 was intended to address the possibility of these sites joining the national system. I would like to clarify a few points:

- The national system does not create new MPAs; it recognizes and supports the nearly 1,600 MPAs that already exist. These may be National Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, National Marine Sanctuaries, or state, local or tribally managed areas, many of which contain portions of the marine environment within their existing boundaries.
- Joining the national system does not affect the management of the park or its existing boundaries or regulations. No new restrictions on fishing, hunting or access are required.
- Two hundred twenty five (225) existing MPAs in 28 states and territories joined the National System of MPAs in April 2009. None of these sites have changed their management, boundaries or restricted fishing access as a result of this action.

Our coastal and marine areas face increasing challenges such as rising sea levels, ocean warming and storm intensity. The purpose of the national system is to help agencies across all levels of government to work together to more effectively address challenges like these that extend beyond the boundaries of an individual MPA. The support and involvement of citizens in the management of existing MPAs is essential. The National System of MPAs, like the National Park system, encourages community involvement. Only through a concerted effort involving stakeholders and communities can we ensure that the recreational, cultural and natural resources of the United States will be conserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

Joe Uravitch
Director, National MPA Center

