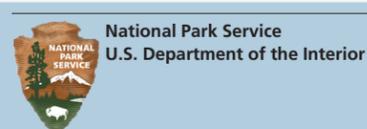


Ocean Stewardship: A Commitment to Collaboration for Conservation



Olympic National Park is one of many National Park Service sites that conserve the grandeur of ocean resources for future generations.



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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Sound ocean stewardship requires a commitment to continually expand our knowledge of the seas. The Alaska and Pacific West Regions have a long history of commitment to resource stewardship through science, resource protection, education, interpretation, and planning. This dedication will be enhanced by collaboration with partners, sharing resources, new training opportunities, and investing in additional personnel, equipment, and facilities; focused on expanding our capacity for ocean stewardship.

Parks and partner sites, Research Learning Centers and universities will serve as centers of excellence for the natural and cultural heritage of our coastal and marine environments. They also will facilitate technical

workshops, symposia, and training to enhance knowledge of ocean issues.

The Pacific Ocean Parks Strategic Plan: Conserving Our Coastal, Island and Marine Resources offers a call to action for the National Park Service to fulfill its leadership role as an ocean conservation agency. Working with the communities and partners who share our ocean heritage, the Alaska and Pacific West regions can restore and conserve the grandeur of ocean resources in the National Park System for future generations.



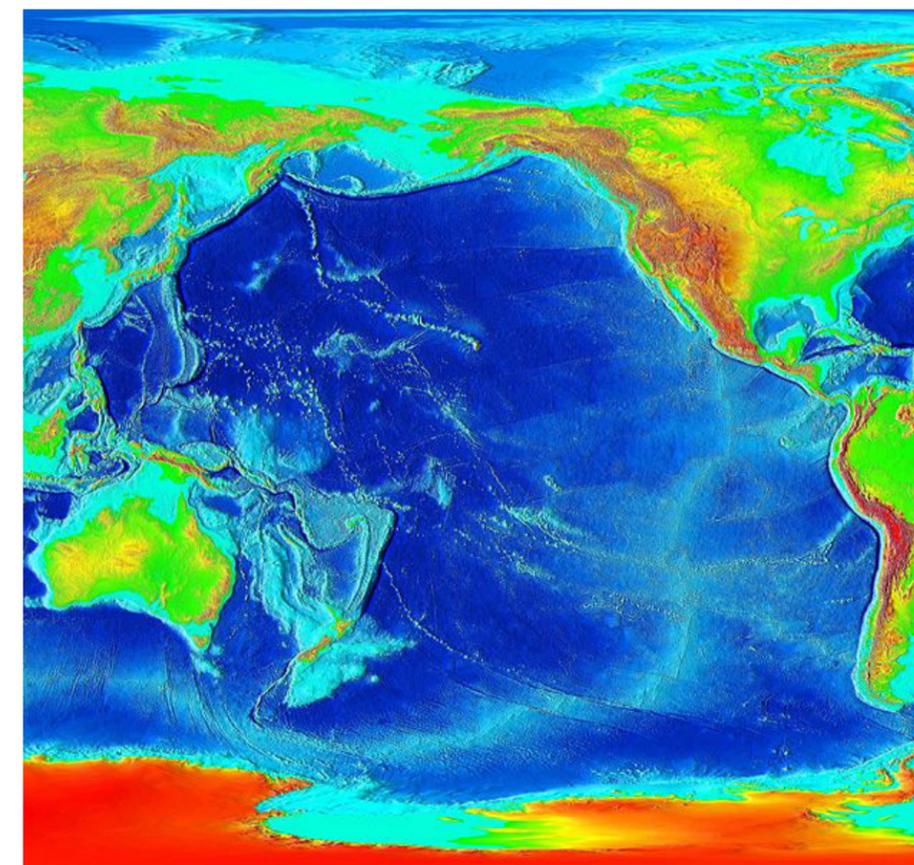
Pacific Ocean

Stewardship Without Boundaries: Conserving Our Ocean Ecosystem from Baja to the Bering Sea

Since the establishment of the first coastal park in 1916, marine resources in the National Park System have grown to include more than three million acres of ocean and 5,000 miles of coast. The Pacific West and Alaska Regions are comprised of 34 diverse coastal park units; with every other inland unit connected to the ocean by watersheds, weather, migration routes, and trade.

Millions of people visit the Pacific Ocean parks and their watersheds to experience our nation's heritage where land meets water and life is entwined with the sea. Rocky coasts, white sand beaches, deep-water fjords, coral reefs, tidewater glaciers, kelp forests, wetlands, watersheds, and tidally influenced estuarine systems support abundant life and contain culturally and historically significant resources. Congress charged the National Park Service with conserving both natural and cultural resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of current and future generations. Their benefits to the nation as places for recreation, sanctuaries for wildlife, and sources of local economic activity are unsurpassed.

In recent years, the Department of Interior and the National Park Service have placed greater emphasis on the management and stewardship of ocean resources. This emphasis addresses the challenges facing our watersheds and coastal and oceanic systems, including: climate change, development, nutrient runoff, declining water quality, ocean pollution, overfishing, and



The Pacific Ocean Park Stewardship Action Plan provides a landscape-level approach to ocean conservation and stewardship spanning diverse sites from the South Pacific to the Bering Sea.

the introduction of invasive species. These challenges threaten to diminish the ecological integrity, beauty, biodiversity, cultural resources, and recreational opportunities throughout the Pacific West and Alaska Region parks.

Using the vision provided in the Pacific Ocean Park Stewardship Action Plan, the current and future challenges confronting parks will be addressed through the following strategies:

- Establish a seamless network of ocean parks, sanctuaries, refuges and reserves;

- Inventory, map and protect ocean parks;
- Engage visitors in ocean park stewardship; and
- Increase NPS technical capacity for ocean exploration and stewardship.

Recognizing that the ocean's influence stretches far beyond the boundaries of the National Park Service and coastal waters, the Pacific Ocean Strategic Plan hopes to protect these outstanding resources of all Pacific West and Alaska Region parks for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

A Seamless Network

With so many federal, state, local agencies, and conservation organizations sharing responsibility for protecting coastal, marine, and watershed resources, the idea of a seamless network of parks, sanctuaries, refuges, and reserves working together is gaining momentum. In August 2005, an interagency General Agreement to achieve a higher level of coastal and marine resource protection and conservation was signed by the National Park Service, National Marine Sanctuary Program, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Goals of this seamless coastal and marine network include:

- Improve management efficiencies
- Increase understanding of resources
- Enhance public awareness and education
- Improve resource protection
- Improve effectiveness of resource planning

The Pacific Ocean Parks Strategic Plan outlines specific partner opportunities to enhance marine resource conservation and education. Strategies include establishing Marine Reserves; convening multi-agency workshops; participating in the West Coast Governor's Oceans Working Group, the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum, and the Pacific Regional Environment Programme; and studying the feasibility of a Pacific West and Alaska Ocean Center of Excellence.

The strategic plan also calls for facilitating international partnerships and building sister park relationships with Canada, Mexico, and throughout the Pacific Islands. Working together is crucial to the conservation of coral reefs, estuaries, kelp forests, marine mammal habitats, coastal heritage resources, and other valuable marine and watershed resources.

Life Entwined with the Sea: The Non-Coastal Park Connection

From the Inupiat communities of Cape Krusenstern National Monument to the coral reefs of the National Park of American Samoa, our sites and resources are entwined with the sea. Some park sites may appear distant from the ocean, but even they were once teeming with ocean life or are connected to the sea by watersheds, weather, rivers, migration routes, and trade. The geologic bones of many of our inland parks including John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, Death Valley, and Great Basin National Parks were created from creatures and plants that once thrived in ancient oceans. Fossil evidence tells the story of life and changing environments. Without the eons of ocean sediment for the forces of erosion to work upon, our parks would not exist as we know them today.

The health of not only our national parks, but our society, is linked with the sea. Climate change affects ocean weather patterns and water availability for all terrestrial life. A clockwise circulation of

water, known as the North Pacific Gyre generally dominates the North Pacific and regulates water temperatures. This pattern of circulation is comprised of several smaller – but no less important – currents, the Alaskan Current, the Californian Current, the North Equatorial Current, which eventually form the Kuroshio Current. This saline current warms the shores of the western Pacific and mediates weather conditions for coastal and inland areas alike. Fluctuations in current temperature such as El Niño or La Niña have far ranging effects on weather in the interior of the country such as droughts, severe weather systems, and higher or lower than normal summer and winter temperatures.

Land bound parks may seem separated from the ocean by geography, they too have been and are being shaped by ocean processes. “Eventually the ocean consumes everything from feathers to continents, yet... something new is always being born.”



Death Valley National Park's Grapevine Mountains are composed of limestone, which tells the story of the park's ancient, watery past. The forces of erosion continue to shape the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes.

Engage Visitors in Ocean Park Stewardship

Pacific Ocean parks are a destination for local, national, and international visitors; visitors eager to engage in resource stewardship opportunities. Many of our coastal parks are located near major population centers, providing tangible, hands-on venues to promote ocean stewardship. At remote parks, isolation from population centers gives visitors the opportunity to learn about the pervasive influence of human activity and the resilience of our natural systems.

As human populations expand and demographics change, pressures on ocean and watershed resources increase. Knowing the status of ocean and watershed resources, understanding climate change and expected societal consequences, fostering changes in daily habits to promote conservation, and cultivating innovative thinking on approaches for ocean resource protection, highlight just a few of the messages enhancing our awareness of critical marine resource issues.

On-site and virtual park visitors, neighbors, teachers, students, park staff, and volunteers are examples of audiences reached through education, participatory stewardship, leadership by example, and communication.

Engaging the public in protecting the ocean can take many forms. Coastal parks incorporate park-specific examples of our natural and cultural heritage in marine science camps to teach scientific principles (biology, ecology, geology, anthropology). Parks sponsor beach clean-ups as part of local community stewardship programs,



Channel Islands National Park engages students in intertidal monitoring to expand the student's appreciation for ocean health.

harnessing the power of volunteer groups and educating the public about marine debris and environmental issues. Inland parks develop educational and interpretive programs highlighting the ocean connections of salmon with the forests and watersheds. Programs that link ocean generated weather to glacier formation, water supply, and threats associated with global climate change from the coral reefs of Ofu in American Samoa to the mountains in the Pacific Northwest. Migratory birds provide an annual reminder of the inter-connections between land and sea; much as the precious trade goods carried across oceans, mountains, and rivers remind us of the role of the oceans as seen through the cultural artifacts buried in the sands of coastal and inland parks.

While embracing the diversity of our Pacific Ocean parks and their watersheds we acknowledge the commonalities of our ocean connections. Two concepts from the language of our Hawaiian parks, we strive for hana lima kokua - many hands working together, joined in a common goal - to further stewardship of our ahupua'a - mountains connected to the sea.

Inventory Map & Protect Ocean Parks

The National Park Service has stewardship responsibility for over 3 million acres of ocean, about which we know very little. By comparison, after decades of studies, inventories, assessments, and monitoring; our knowledge of terrestrial resources is relatively robust. Our understanding of how submerged environments and associated biota, historic resources, and archeological resources are responding to climate change, including sea-level rise, changing storm frequencies and intensities, changing salinity and temperature, and other issues, such as nutrient input and fishing pressure, must be strengthened to support scientifically-informed management decisions.

The Pacific Ocean Parks Strategic Plan recognizes that coastal and marine regions are increasingly the subject of active management decisions, yet the location and status of most of marine boundaries have not been systematically surveyed. Bathymetry;



Tufted puffins have an important role in the natural and cultural history of Alaska.

benthic habitat; and species composition, distribution, and abundance are examples of basic information essential for park managers to effectively design resource protection strategies, identify restoration needs, implement resource monitoring, and provide for recreation opportunities. The strategic plan also highlights the need to inventory, map and protect the cultural resources that reflect the nation's maritime history and traditional cultural connections to the sea, as well as the uses and value they provide.