

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS)
Advisory Council (AC or SAC)
Youth Seat Subcommittee (YSS)
Summary Report / September 2013

Subcommittee Members

Alan Rammer (Chair) – Marine Resource Committee Alternate
Ellen Matheny –Education Seat
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Purpose

(AC 2013 Work Plan)

- 1) To gain perspective of younger adults on key topics and encourage and foster future leaders in marine conservation
- 2) To recommend if OCNMS should pursue a youth seat or not
- 3) If yes, to identify critical issues, including age criteria and other logistics
- 4) To develop a recruitment plan for a youth or young adult seat

Background

In 2011 Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Director Dan Basta recommended that each sanctuary advisory council consider the addition of a youth seat on each council. The presence of a youth seat would provide opportunities to engage future generations of ocean stewards, users and leaders in sanctuary communities, including the rural and tribal communities adjacent to Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS), and to empower them to witness firsthand the challenges associated with the need for resource protection and ocean management. It was envisioned that the Youth Seat would be a non-governmental, non-voting member representing the youth segment of ages 14-17. Based on this recommendation, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council (AC or SAC) members, working with OCNMS staff, formed a Youth Seat Subcommittee (YSS).

OCNMS staff were concerned about the success and sustainability in having a Youth Seat on the SAC because of the age restriction and the implications of that age range, including the logistics entailed for attending and participating in SAC meetings. Many of the bi-monthly meetings are conducted in widely dispersed communities adjacent to the sanctuary. These communities, including the four Coastal Treaty Tribes located on Indian Reservations (Makah, Hoh, Quileute and Quinault), are somewhat remote and can be difficult to access. Despite the challenges mentioned above, OCNMS staff and its AC members still wanted youth engagement on the SAC

and decided to brainstorm potential avenues for youth participation. During initial YSS discussions, several options to engage younger adults, including a Youth Seat, were considered.

YSS identified four different youth engagement options:

1. **Youth Seat** – The Youth Seat would be a high school student age 14-17 to act as a non-voting member of SAC for a one-year term, with the option for a second year appointment. He / She would attend bi-monthly meetings (six per year at various locations throughout Olympic Peninsula) to provide the council with a youth perspective on key topics.
2. **Student Seat** – The Student Seat would be available to any age student of an undergraduate or graduate program to act as a non-voting member of the Advisory Committee for a one-year term, with the option for a second year appointment. He / She would also attend bi-monthly meetings (six per year at various locations throughout Olympic Peninsula) to provide a student’s perspective on key topics, enriching the overall community reach.
3. **Mentor Seat** – The Mentor Seat would be a non-voting member of the SAC for a two-year term who would recruit student groups to attend and participate in SAC meetings, as appropriate.
4. **Student Participation Program** – The Student Participation Program would allow opportunities for science classes and/or clubs (biology, marine, environmental, etc.) to observe and/or participate in SAC meetings taking place in their communities.

Each option carries opportunities and challenges. (See pros and cons below).

Pros and Cons of Different Youth Engagement Options

Option	Pros	Cons	Notes
Youth Seat	ONMS Director’s original target; unique opportunity for students to be exposed to natural resource management/ policy; engage future leaders/ stakeholders in marine issues; fresh perspective brought to SAC and its members	Logistical challenge of commutes to meetings; potential time/ energy required by AC member or coordinator to mentor and orientate; student missing a full day of school every couple of months; chaperone required background check; 2 year commitment could be a challenge	Existing (but limited) student intern program / Running Start student to draw from- incorporate senior culminating project? Could be especially valuable for tribal youth. Seat does not need to be filled until suitable candidate found. Limited attention span of younger generation today could pose a challenge as well as their mechanisms to communicate.
Student Seat	Provide students with exposure to real-life	Transportation to various meeting sites (OCNMS or	This would not preclude the original target age of

	application of natural resource management/ policy; engage future leaders/ stakeholders in marine issues; fresh perspective brought to SAC and its members; possible application to coursework/ research papers or projects student already undertaking	other); 2 year commitment could be a challenge; possible class conflict with meetings	14-17. Could be especially valuable for tribal youth. Seat does not need to be filled until suitable candidate found. Limited attention span of younger generation today could pose a challenge as well as their mechanisms to communicate.
Mentor Seat	Exposes a larger number of students overall to the SAC; targeting student(s) from area of meeting location might result in more engaged students; utilizes contacts that are potentially already established in each locale	Student exposure is more superficial, one-time basis; Time demanding for a SAC member or OCNMS staff/ SAC coordinator;	Mentor could encourage student(s) to participate actively or present on something, which would require more preparation time in advance for both mentor and student(s)
Student Participation Program	Exposes a larger number of students overall to the SAC; targeting student(s) from area of meeting location might result in more engaged students; lead or driven by teacher or student group leader; utilizes contacts that are potentially already established	Student exposure is more superficial, one-time basis; requires coordination time/ energy from a SAC member or OCNMS staff/ SAC coordinator; could make meeting length longer; student(s) stand to gain more than SAC from the participation	Student(s) could participate in an active way by presenting something

OCNMS staff contacted other sanctuaries regarding their experience with a SAC Youth Seat (see summary below). Each site with youth representation on their SAC had different and unique approaches to establishing a youth or student seat and provided valuable feedback. One of the main lessons learned was the importance of keeping the scope of the process small in the early stages of development, allowing the process to be adaptive. The actual formalizing of a Youth Seat can be a dynamic, long-term process.

Brief Summary of Youth Engagement in National Marine Sanctuaries

Monitor NMS
Monitor NMS has a “Student Working Group” that meets monthly on Saturdays (5-9 official members and other interested students volunteer; students’ parents usually attend meetings). From the Student Working Group, a Student Seat was added to the SAC and the Working Group members elected one student to hold the seat on the SAC. Students performed activities as outreach as they earn service hours. Examples (create t-shirts, flyers, videos, Facebook pages on

relevant topics, shared power point presentations, etc.)

Overall the experience has been very positive and worthwhile, but does involve a significant amount of SAC Coordinator's time/energy. The students bring fresh perspective to the SAC and are enthusiastic and energetic.

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale NMS

HIHWNMS began establishing a Youth Seat in 2011 and recruited a very successful student member, who flew alone from her home island to Oahu where meetings were held. Her school was supportive of her missing classes for the meetings (held twice annually, but sometimes a 2-day consecutive meeting requiring an overnight stay). The Youth Seat member is non-voting member and is mostly an observer/listener. Their first member became very active and involved (wrote a published article on the sanctuary, helped distribute sanctuary info to other schools, raised funds for clean-up efforts, participated in Ocean Literacy Principles as part of Management Plan Review Process) graduated and started college. A new YS member was recruited from Oahu and will attend her first meeting in the fall 2013. So far the overall experience has been positive for both the Youth Seat member and the SAC.

Flower Garden Banks NMS

Flower Garden Banks NMS AC recommended establishing a Youth Seat, but they decided to start the process slowly by forming a SAC Youth Working Group, consisting of students from the Galveston High School (after initially targeting the wrong student audience). About ten students, along with their high school teacher, attend monthly after-school meetings during the academic year. All students were seniors (except for one) and from the same school and had no baseline knowledge of the sanctuary, so they hope to balance age distribution in the future. Monthly Youth Working Group meetings were structured by the SAC participants (Education member and SAC coordinator). At the end of the year the group presented to the SAC at their May meeting on their overall ideas and impressions with a summary of their experience.

Overall the process has been slower than anticipated and they expect that this will be something that will develop over several years. The students seemed to gain a fair amount from the Youth Working Group, but it wasn't as much of a benefit for the SAC based on what ONMS envisioned.

Stellwagen Bank NMS

The SBNMS AC decided to move forward with the idea of the Youth Seat right away. They started with a primary Youth Seat member (no alternate) who served for one year due to graduating and going off to college. They would like to seek a 10th or 11th grade YS member next round to make for a deeper experience on the student's part as well as a more efficient process for the recruiting team. Participation involved both being an observer as well as updating members on her interests and school projects. SBNMS holds three AC meetings annually and the student was not able to attend one due to the long distance of the meeting. Her

school was supportive of her SAC attendance, which caused her to miss school on meeting dates.

Overall the SAC feels that it has been beneficial to the both the student and to their council. They believe it will improve when the SAC coordinator is able to spend more time mentoring the student (coordinator was on medical leave during the first Youth Seat member's term). Their Sanctuary Volunteer Coordinator was very involved in the communication/ coordination

Gulf of Farallones NMS

GFNMS AC was unanimously in favor of involving youth in the SAC in 2011. They formed a subcommittee and researched the best approach to take, and decided to form a non-voting Youth Seat right away. The Youth Seat members (primary and alternate) would each be assigned to a volunteer SAC member, who will serve as a mentor. GFNMS AC altered their charter to include a Youth Seat in 2012 (using suggested language from ONMS almost verbatim). They hope to resume the recruitment process by the end of the year.

National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa

National Marine Sanctuaries of American Samoa was permitted to create a Student Seat to account for cultural protocols. Students can range from ages 14 to 25, such as a college student. The first Student Seat member began in 2012. She is a local 6th grade school teacher.

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

In 2011 Papahānaumokuākea MNM was in the process of going from a Reserve Advisory Council to a Monument Alliance Group. After that process, they planned to add two Student Seats (primary and alternate). They already have a Navigating Change Program in place for Elementary and Middle Schools and plan to recruit alumni from this program for their SAC Student Seats.

Monterey Bay NMS

They are in the process of considering the addition of student involvement and what form it would take.

Thunder Bay NMS

They tried to add a Youth Seat in the past, but the staff involved left.

OCNMS staff also contacted regional students, teachers and school administrators to request feedback regarding the different options. Although feedback was limited, it was very positive regarding student participation in SAC meetings. Students and teachers recognized that there

would be some challenges, especially involving the Youth Seat, that would need to be considered. Concerns included transportation needs, potential need for chaperones, potential need for substitute teacher reimbursement, ability for students to stay engaged, and student recruitment. Dan Lieberman, who teaches Natural Resources classes at North Olympic Peninsula Skills Center, was very optimistic. He had a student in mind for the Youth Seat and felt that the student could work with a SAC mentor to facilitate the Student Participation Program. Subcommittee members praised Mr. Lieberman for his enthusiasm, but felt the SAC should not develop a Youth Seat based on one student's availability. The subcommittee felt that by introducing a larger group of students to the SAC process through the Student Participation Program for a trial period of one year, the SAC would be in a better position to re-evaluate the potential for a SAC Youth Seat in the future. In this way, more students and teachers from the various meeting communities/schools could be involved in the initial process, allowing for a better overall understanding of if or how a Youth Seat could be established in the long term.

Recommendation:

At this time, the Youth Seat Subcommittee (YSS) recommends initiating the SAC Student Participation Program. In creating a Student Participation Program instead of a Youth Seat, more youth would be exposed to the SAC and the issues surrounding OCNMS in the region, with the intent to encourage them to become more aware of and engaged in coastal and marine issues, therefore leading to better future stewards and decision makers. In addition, the SAC would gain youth perspectives from the larger youth groups, a demographic of which it has not yet directly had engagement and dialogue with. The success of this program would call for any interested SAC members and/or alternates to be engaged in recruiting and interfacing with groups of youth. SAC members interested in participating in this role could alter over time, based on meeting location and links to communities and/or schools in a given meeting location.

YSS recommends implementing the Student Participation Program for one year at every SAC meeting possible, starting at the November 2013 SAC meeting, then reviewing the success of the program at the January 2015 SAC meeting.