

Comment submitted to MPR e-mail account on 11-06-08  
Sender requested anonymous submission

It's not clear to me how the National Marine Sanctuary system addresses trade-offs among your many worthy goals. Do you take a multiple-use approach in which all legitimate uses must be balanced against one another? Or do you take a more hierarchical approach to goals, as the National Wildlife Refuge System has taken since 1997?

I would like to see an explicitly hierarchical approach to the goals in your planning process. In this approach, ecosystem management goals would take priority, and would have to be met before other goals could be pursued.

Sustainable harvest of fish and other marine resources should certainly be part of OCNMS goals, with priority to tribal treaty rights. It's not clear to me how much authority OCNMS has over harvests or fishing regulations, nor how much expertise the Sanctuary has in this area even if it has authority. While it may not want to get involved in helping to determine catches, the Sanctuary should prohibit damaging fishing techniques within its boundaries, such as bottom trawling. The OCNMS should also establish some marine reserves that are protected from fishing, even if these reserves are small. These can serve as important refugia that restock adjacent damaged or overfished areas.

Other goals should receive lower priority than ecosystem management and sustainable harvest goals. This may mean that the OCNMS needs to restrict or prohibit some economic uses of the Sanctuary if these pose a damage to its living resources.

Finally, data collection and ongoing scientific research programs are important. Though they may not yield useful results in the short term, long-term monitoring projects will be essential for OCNMS to understand how climate change affects its resources. The tribes and other local communities have a lot of knowledge that the OCNMS should try to use effectively.