

SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL



May 21, 2010

Myles (Chip) Boothe, Chair
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Northwest Straits Commission

Artwork: David Sones

Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East West Hwy
Room: 11523 Building: SSMC4 Routing Code: N/NMS Silver Spring,
MD 20910-3278

Dear Director Basta:

During the course of the Management Plan Review process of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS) the OCNMS Advisory Council (AC) has identified a need that we feel may be common to most or all U.S. Sanctuaries. The OCNMS AC has identified data management and accessibility as a critical component of the OCNMS management plan. Data management, sharing and reporting forges vital links to sanctuary partners and the public that supports sanctuaries while strengthening the power of a sanctuary to monitor the environment that it protects. Furthermore, President Obama mandated shortly after taking office that information from federal programs be made more accessible to the public. We rate this activity as crucial to all Sanctuary programs.

However, the current systems, infrastructure and support that exist within the OCNMS and other sanctuaries are inadequate to store, regulate and deliver data to researchers and the public. We urge the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) to prioritize data standardization, collection and timely distribution through a central nexus where all of its sanctuaries can store relevant environmental data.

Many of our national marine sanctuaries are ideally suited as “sentinel sites” that can note changes in physical and biological baselines potentially associated with climate change. Other sanctuary activities

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would also benefit from rigorous archiving of data and dissemination to the public and academic community. For this to become a reality, we believe the ONMS must increase support to its constituent sanctuaries for data archiving and access.

In a world of “cloud computing” and mega-servers it is at the national level that data storage and retrieval can be accomplished in a fiscally responsible manner. We urge the ONMS to prioritize data standardization, collection and timely distribution through a central nexus where all of its sanctuaries can store relevant environmental (and other) data. From this nexus sanctuary staff, sanctuary partners, researchers and the public would be able to download data in standard formats across all sanctuaries. Graphs of basic parameters would be available for cursory examination of trends within sanctuaries while raw data sets would be available for further research and examination. The resources necessary for such an effort by the ONMS are best suited to a central location such as Washington D.C. or Silver Spring where database management expertise exists and data can be properly protected.

President Obama mandated shortly after taking office that information from federal programs be made more accessible to the public. An effort by the ONMS to centralize the environmental data from its sanctuaries would help it achieve this mandate from the President while increasing public support and emphasizing the importance of these jewels within the waters of the United States. The ONMS would better be able to illustrate the incredible value of these treasures while facilitating the abilities of its local sanctuaries to use the data they have collected and continue to collect over the years.

Sincerely,



Myles (Chip) Boothe
Chair, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council