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## **NOAA Begins Review of Comments on Present and Future of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary**

NOAA Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary managers are now analyzing nearly 700 comments received from the public during the first phase of a comprehensive review of the sanctuary's management plan. The review process will help managers set a vision and course for protecting the sanctuary's rich marine ecosystems while continuing to allow compatible, sustainable human uses.

"We are pleased to see the high level of public interest in the future of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary," said Carol Bernthal, sanctuary superintendent. "We appreciate the time and energy that so many are committing to the sanctuary's care."

The comments offered during the public scoping phase of the management plan review, called "Navigating the Future," varied widely. Many stressed the importance of partnerships with the Makah, Quileute, Hoh tribes and Quinault Indian Nation. Topics included treaty rights and collaboration with tribal councils, resource managers, tribal scientists and members of reservation communities.

Comments were also aimed at balancing the resource protection mandate of the sanctuary with emerging demands on the sea, such as aquaculture, wave and wind energy, recreational pressure and coastal development. Others addressed specific issues such as the risk of oil spills. Comments included the need to understand the ocean better and the pressures confronting it, including climate change.

In late September and early October, sanctuary staff hosted seven meetings in Port Angeles, Neah Bay, La Push, Ocean Shores, Westport, Olympia and Seattle. More than 160 people attended, offering comments at the workshops. They also received comments by mail, e-mail and fax or delivered in person during the public comment period that closed Nov. 14.

Sanctuary managers are analyzing the comments with the assistance and expertise of the sanctuary's advisory council and the Intergovernmental Policy Council, which represents the state and treaty resource co-managers. The comments will be used to develop action plans to address sanctuary management issues.

Sanctuary advisory council meetings are open to the public and offer an important opportunity for the public to participate in the management plan process. Advisory

council meetings for 2009 have been tentatively scheduled for March 20, May 15, July 24, Sept. 18 and Nov. 20. Once the action plans are drafted, they will be included in a draft management plan that will be subject to public review and comment.

NOAA's Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary was designated in 1994 as the first national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Northwest, encompassing about 3,300 square miles off the Washington coast. Significant natural and cultural resources include 29 species of marine mammals, large populations of nesting seabirds, archaeological sites, and some of the last remaining wilderness coastline in the lower 48 states.

NOAA works to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

On the Web:

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary: <http://olympiccoast.noaa.gov>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>