

National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report Overview

What is a National Marine Sanctuary Condition Report?

Condition Reports provide a standardized summary of resources in the National Marine Sanctuaries, drivers and pressures on those resources, the current condition and trends for resources and ecosystem services, and management responses to the pressures that threaten the integrity of the marine environment. Specifically, the Condition Reports include information on the status and trends of water quality, habitat, living resources and maritime archaeological resources and the human activities that affect them. The reports also rate ecosystem service status and trends.



What is the goal of a Condition Report?

Condition Reports document the condition of sanctuary resources and ecosystem services based on sanctuary staff judgments after consultation with selected partners and best available information. The reports serve as a tool to determine if the sanctuaries are achieving their resource protection and improvement goals as reflected in NMSP performance measures.

All reports are fairly high level and should be thought of as executive summaries that summarize the condition of the sanctuaries. The Condition Reports are not the place for presenting the bulk of monitoring data that is collected at the sanctuary; rather it is a summary of findings from any and all monitoring programs that exist at a site.

Report text explains the basis for judgment for determining resource status and trend. This text summarizes monitoring findings relating to each question. Associated graphs, tables and other images are also used to support each judgment. In general, experts base their judgment of status and trends on changes that have resulted from anthropogenic impacts that can be managed rather than natural drivers that cannot be.

Condition Reports for all sanctuaries follow the same format and include the same basic elements:

- About This Report
- Framework of Condition Reports
- Summary and Findings
- Summary Table
- Site History and Resources
- Driving Forces and Pressures on the Sanctuary
- State of Sanctuary Resources
- Ecosystem Services

- Response to Pressures
- Concluding Remarks
- Acknowledgements
- Citations

How is the Condition Report developed?

Resource status and trends are rated through responses to a set of 17 specific questions that are designed to gauge the condition of sanctuary resources. The questions focus on aspects of Water Quality; Habitat Resources; Living Resources; Maritime Archaeological Resources; and the human activities that affect them (see Sidebar). Condition reports also include consideration of ecosystem services which describe how humans benefit or suffer loss with changes in the conditions of resources.

The Ecosystem Services that are rated in Condition Reports include:

| Cultural (non-material benefits) | Regulating (buffers to change) | Provisioning (products and supplies) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Sense of place | Coastal Protection | Biotechnology |
| Non-consumptive recreation | | Ornamentals |
| Consumptive recreation | | Food |
| Science | | Water |
| Education | | Energy |
| Heritage | | |

The status of resources and ecosystem services is rated according to a color-coded stoplight scheme of red/poor to yellow/fair to green/good. The trend in resource and ecosystem services condition is summarized to indicate whether conditions have improved, declined, or not changed since the last condition report. Graphs, tables, images and text are provided to support the conclusions.

What is the anticipated timing for the next OCNMS Condition Report?

OCNMS staff will begin preparing for the condition report later this year in an effort to kick off the project in early 2019. The process is likely to take two years to complete and will involve workshops and discussions with partners, library research, drafting and editing, and several rounds of review. We are hoping for additional coordination and analytical support from NOAA partners that can assist in identification of relevant data and help synthesize disparate information into a cohesive document.

17 Questions

The 17 questions receive a status rating on a scale from "good" to "poor" and a trend rating.

Drivers and Pressures

1. What are the states of influential human drivers and how are they changing?
2. What are the levels of human activities that may adversely influence water quality and how are they changing?
3. What are the levels of human activities that may adversely influence habitats and how are they changing?
4. What are the levels of human activities that may adversely influence living resource quality and how are they changing?
5. What are the levels of human activities that may adversely influence maritime archaeological resource quality and how are they changing?

Water Quality

6. What is the eutrophic condition of sanctuary waters and how is it changing?
7. Do sanctuary waters pose risks to human health and how are they changing?
8. Have recent changes in climate altered water conditions and how are they changing?
9. Are other stressors, individually or in combination, affecting water quality, and how are they changing?

Habitat Resources

10. What is the integrity of major habitat types and how is it changing?
11. What are contaminant concentrations in sanctuary habitats and how are they changing?

Living Resources

12. What is the status of keystone and foundation species and how is it changing?
13. What is the status of other focal species and how is it changing?
14. What is the status of non-indigenous species and how is it changing?
15. What is the status of biodiversity and how is it changing?

Maritime Archaeological Resources

16. What is the archaeological integrity of known maritime archaeological resources and how is it changing?
17. Do known maritime archaeological resources pose an environmental hazard and how is this threat changing?