

Mr. Jason Patlis, President and CEO, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
Testimony Submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
“FY2014 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations”
March 21, 2013

FY14 Appropriations Request

For thirteen years, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF) has worked with Congress and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to connect our fellow citizens to the underwater places that define the American ocean – the National Marine Sanctuary System. We remain concerned that NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) has not received sufficient appropriations for several consecutive budget cycles. In recognition of the coastal job creation benefits provided by national marine sanctuaries – especially through the procurement of vessels and construction of visitor centers – NMSF respectfully requests that the subcommittee remedy this situation by appropriating:

- ***\$5.5 million to the Marine Sanctuaries Construction Base, within NOAA’s Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction account; and***
- ***\$55 million to the Marine Sanctuary Program Base, within NOAA’s Operations, Research, and Facilities account.***

Joining NMSF in this request is the national network of community-based, non-profit organizations that support specific sites within the sanctuary system. On behalf of their members from coast to coast, the Channel Islands Sanctuary Foundation (CA), Cordell Marine Sanctuary Foundation (CA), Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association (CA), Friends of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MI), Hawai`i National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (HI), Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation (CA), Olympic Coast Alliance (WA), Sanctuary Friends Foundation of the Florida Keys (FL), and Stellwagen Alive! (MA) support funding the National Marine Sanctuary System at these levels. Please see Appendix I for details.

National Marine Sanctuaries are Unique and Successful Ocean Conservation Tools

Sanctuaries embody our nation’s commitment to preserve the best of the American ocean for future generations – they are our underwater national parks. They support economic vitality and thousands of businesses in coastal communities, preserve vibrant underwater and maritime treasures for our children and grandchildren to enjoy, and provide critical public access for ocean recreation, research, and education. Through stakeholder-driven planning processes designed to accommodate multiple uses of the ocean and validated repeatedly over the 40-year history of the sanctuary program, ONMS successfully manages 13 national marine sanctuaries and the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

Numerous external reviews have concluded that sanctuaries are fundamentally well-conceived, cover gaps in other federal laws, and are making progress towards long-term protection of marine ecosystems. Unlike most other ocean resource laws, which focus on controlling specific activities or managing specific species, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act protects nationally significant places, along with the natural, historical, and cultural riches that make them worth preserving for future generations. Experience shows that this approach is vital to maintaining the healthy seascapes that underpin our incredibly productive coastal economies – and that the return on our investment in sanctuaries is simply too valuable to ignore.

Significant Changes to ONMS Responsibilities from FY13 to FY14

While we recognize the challenges associated with providing increased funding in the current budget climate, several ongoing changes within NOAA have worsened the existing shortfall in sanctuary budgets. A slight increase is warranted in FY14 to accommodate the following new priorities.

1) *Marine Protected Areas Center*

Despite the realization of management efficiencies that are actively lowering costs, the proposed FY13 consolidation of NOAA's Marine Protected Areas Center (MPAC) with ONMS was accompanied by funding cuts that sharply reduced the capacity of both programs. We strongly encourage the Subcommittee to consider the complementary nature of activities performed by MPAC and ONMS, and we urge you to ensure that any FY14 funding intended for MPAC is added to the Marine Sanctuary Program base level. Furthermore, given the FY13 consolidation, it is critical that MPAC funds are appropriated to ONMS rather than NOAA's Coastal Management Program (as was the case in prior years).

2) *National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa*

Following an extensive public process, the Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary expanded from 0.25 to 13,581 square miles, incorporating the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument, in November 2012. We strongly encourage the Subcommittee to ensure that FY14 funding intended for Rose Atoll management is added to the Marine Sanctuary Program base level. Furthermore, given the incorporation of Rose Atoll into the re-named National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa, it is critical that Rose Atoll funds are appropriated to ONMS rather than NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (as was the case in prior years).

National Marine Sanctuaries are Economic Engines for Coastal Communities

Between 2005 and 2009, when overall US employment dropped by 2.3%, coastal tourism and recreation employment grew by 2.7% and helped our nation survive the recession.

Sanctuary stewardship efforts are vital to the success of coastal businesses. According to the National Ocean Economics Program, 72% of ocean and coastal employment – over 1.8 million jobs in 2009 – in the tourism and recreation sector depends on visitor opportunities that require the clean beaches, clean water, and abundant fish and wildlife promoted by the National Marine Sanctuary System. Investing in sanctuaries does much more than simply protect small areas of the ocean – national marine sanctuaries are fueling job creation in coastal communities, and investing in sanctuaries is a down payment on the future of equipment manufacturers, hospitality operators, and ocean recreation vendors, not to mention the many other Americans whose livelihoods are dependent on a healthy ocean and coasts. We offer the following examples to suggest that the benefits of funding our national marine sanctuaries far outweigh the federal outlays that support them:

- Management of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary off Massachusetts costs taxpayers under \$2 million annually, and healthy sanctuary waters draw the tourists who spent \$126 million on commercial whale-watching trips there during 2008 alone, supporting 31 businesses and almost 600 jobs.¹
- Taxpayers spend less than \$3 million per year to manage the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary off California, whose waters are the focus of a marine science and education industry that employed over 2,100 people and had a \$291 million budget in 2012.²

- The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, where management costs less than \$6 million per year, protects coral reefs and legal fishing opportunities that are the backbone of a marine tourism and recreation industry in the two adjacent counties – employing over 70,000 people and contributing \$4.5 billion per year to state GDP.³

National Marine Sanctuaries Start and Stay in Local Communities

The designation and management of new sanctuaries are wholly dependent on ‘bottom-up’ processes where local communities are involved from the very beginning – sanctuaries actually devolve power from Washington, DC and give constituents control over the destiny of their coasts. All sanctuary rules and regulations are developed on a site-by-site basis, and sanctuaries are designed from the outset to accommodate multiple uses of the ocean. Coastal communities have a controlling influence on sanctuary priorities, ensuring that they address unique, local circumstances. This community-driven approach to decide where sanctuaries are located and what is allowed within them is one of the most public in our democracy – and it’s only one reason why 98% of sanctuaries remain open to fishing.

National marine sanctuaries are created by and for the people: citizens and communities propose sites and then have at least three additional chances to weigh in during the process. In addition, over 700 Sanctuary Advisory Council representatives from the fishing, tourism, and maritime commerce industries; Tribes, state and local government; and researchers, educators, and conservationists spend over 13,000 hours each year to help manage sanctuary operations day-to-day. Sanctuaries are also hubs for volunteer activity: over 100,000 hours are contributed by local sanctuary volunteers each year, and sanctuary volunteer programs in California and Hawai`i have won the federal government’s Take Pride in America Award (for Outstanding Federal Volunteer Program) for the past two years.

National Marine Sanctuaries’ Programmatic Outlook under Reduced FY14 Funding Levels

Sequestration alone will likely result in the termination of 15 contractors, and six FTE-equivalent positions will remain unfilled (this combination is equivalent to a 5% workforce reduction). In addition, a decrease of \$500,000 in funding for vessel operations and maintenance will most likely result in cancelled cruises and degraded equipment.

We project that additional budget cuts will result in more terminations of contractors who perform FTE-equivalent duties; reduced operations at visitor centers; a lack of contingency funding needed in case of emergencies like oil spills; and additional inoperable vessels tied up at the docks. In addition, lack of funds will likely result in cuts to public access and recreation opportunities, cancellation of partnerships that leverage private funds for taxpayer benefits, and the dismantling of successful education initiatives.

The potential impact of reducing sanctuary appropriations goes far beyond the individual sanctuaries themselves: limiting visitor center hours, eliminating research programs, and diminishing enforcement capacities will prevent ONMS from fulfilling its statutory mandates while also reducing the economic activity and job creation that surrounds healthy sanctuary communities from coast to coast. For example, funding national marine sanctuaries below the recommended levels could force the program to:

- **Cut treasured public access and recreation opportunities for all Americans.**
Funding cuts risk the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary’s 767 mooring buoys, which

provide public access and recreational opportunities within the sanctuary while protecting coral reefs and shipwrecks from anchor damage, preserving them for future generations.

- **Restrict enforcement operations that protect legal fishermen.**
Lack of funding jeopardizes on-water patrols for illegal fishermen in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. In a single 2013 case, illegal fishermen were charged with over 1,300 violations for pilfering 664 yellowtail snapper from a closed area that was recently shown to have provided benefits to both fish populations and commercial and recreational anglers.
- **Dramatically shrink visitor center hours.**
Sanctuary visitor centers serve as the public face of NOAA and see over 350,000 visitors per year, including the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Exploration Center (Santa Cruz, CA), Mokuāpapa Discovery Center (Hilo, HI), Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center (Alpena, MI), and Florida Keys EcoDiscovery Center (Key West, FL).
- **Eliminate collaborations with museums that leverage private funds for taxpayer benefits.**
Placing educational exhibits in partner institutions, like the California Academy of Sciences' three-story "California Coast" aquarium, is a successful and cost-effective method for reaching the American public. Over 1 million Academy visitors each year learn how the Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary protects America's valuable ocean and maritime resources.
- **Cancel partnerships with universities that leverage private funds for taxpayer benefits.**
Funding cuts could risk research alliances with Oregon State University, Stanford University, and the University of California for collection of wind, tide, current, and marine life data critical to maritime commerce and search-and-rescue operations within the Channel Islands, Monterey Bay, Gulf of the Farallones, Cordell Bank, and Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuaries.

NOAA Needs Sufficient Funds to Fulfill its Responsibilities to the American People

As a member of the Friends of NOAA coalition, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation works to educate and inform interested audiences about the full range of NOAA activities, enabling the agency to more effectively carry out its responsibilities relating to our ocean and coasts, fisheries, research, and weather and climate, including satellites. From weather forecasts to fisheries management, NOAA provides decision makers with critically important data, products, and services that promote and enhance the nation's economy, security, environment, and quality of life. Providing insufficient funding for NOAA will only serve to diminish the economic activity and job creation that is at present successfully revitalizing communities across America.

We hope the subcommittee will see the benefits of investing in NOAA and the National Marine Sanctuary System, and that a failure to provide sufficient funding will endanger, quite literally, American lives and livelihoods across the nation.

¹ O'Connor, Simon *et al* (2009). Whale Watching Worldwide: tourism numbers, expenditures and expanding economic benefits, a special report from the International Fund for Animal Welfare. Prepared by Economists at Large. Available: http://www.ifaw.org/Publications/Program_Publications/Whales/asset_upload_file841_55365.pdf.

² Monterey Bay Crescent Ocean Research Consortium. (2012) "Major Marine Sciences Facilities in the Monterey Bay Crescent-2012." Available: http://web.me.com/paduan/mbcorc/Membership_Info_files/MontereyBayLabs2012-2.pdf.

³ National Ocean Economics Program. (2004) "Ocean Economy Data." Available: <http://www.oceaneconomics.org/Market/ocean/oceanEconResults.asp?IC=N&selState=12&selCounty=12086&selCounty=12087&selYears=All&selSector=6&selIndust=All&selValue=All&cbMultiplier=Multiply&selOut=display&noepID=3204>.



March 18, 2013

The Honorable Frank Wolf
H-309, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf:



As Congress begins negotiations on the Fiscal Year 2014 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you prioritize programmatic requests for:

- **Marine Sanctuaries Construction Base**, within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC) account **at a level of \$5.5 million**; and
- **Marine Sanctuary Program Base**, within NOAA's Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) account, **at a level of \$55 million**.



We are deeply concerned by recent proposals to terminate sanctuaries' PAC account, which would likely result in multiple, unfinished construction projects and prevent NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) from acquiring the vessels necessary to complete core research, education, and law enforcement missions that simply cannot be accomplished from land alone. Sanctuary PAC funds support direct job creation and economic growth through the construction and operation of vessels, visitor centers, and other facilities, and we strongly encourage you to oppose terminating PAC funds that provide critical links between our ocean and the millions of Americans who visit the coast each year.



Experience shows that national marine sanctuaries are vital to maintaining the healthy ocean ecosystems that underpin our incredibly productive coastal economies – and the return on our investment in sanctuaries is simply too valuable to ignore. For example, management of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary costs taxpayers only \$1.5 million annually and draws the tourists who spend over \$100 million per year on commercial whale-watching trips there. Furthermore, recent research has proven that sanctuary management can provide benefits to both ocean ecosystems and the commercial and recreational anglers who are critical to coastal economies. Sanctuaries are making essential contributions to marine ecosystem health and coastal job creation, and sufficient ORF funding will allow ONMS to sustain progress to date.



We are particularly concerned that ONMS has not received adequate appropriations in past budget cycles due to the program's increased responsibilities in FY14. NOAA's MPA Center, previously funded through the Coastal Management program, now resides within ONMS, and ONMS also has new responsibility for managing the Rose Atoll Marine National Monument, previously funded through the National Marine Fisheries Service, as part of the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa. We strongly encourage you to ensure that funding for these priorities is added to the base level for the Marine Sanctuary Program.



The impacts of sequestration are already projected to reduce vessel operations and maintenance funding to untenable levels and reduce ONMS' overall workforce by 5%. Closing visitor centers, eliminating research programs, diminishing enforcement capacities, and abolishing education initiatives will prevent ONMS from implementing sanctuary management plans – driven and informed by local communities and constituents – for yet another year. We strongly urge you to remedy this situation by supporting an overall appropriation of \$60.5 million for sanctuaries in FY14.



Thank you for your consideration of this request. We wish you all the best for the remainder of the 113th Congress.

Sincerely,



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