

Mr. Jason Patlis, President and CEO, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
Testimony Submitted to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
“FY2013 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations”
March 22, 2012

Appropriations Request

For twelve 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. The President’s Budget Request for 2013 could jeopardize economic growth in coastal communities by terminating funding for national marine sanctuary vessel acquisition and visitor center construction, including the completion of ongoing projects. NMSF respectfully requests that the subcommittee remedy this situation by appropriating:

- *\$5.495 million to the Marine Sanctuaries Construction Base, within NOAA’s Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction account (FY2012 enacted level); and*
- *\$49 million to the Marine Sanctuary Program Base, within NOAA’s Operations, Research, and Facilities account (FY2010 enacted level).*

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), Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation (CA), Olympic Coast Alliance (WA), Sanctuary Friends Foundation of the Florida Keys (FL), and Stellwagen Alive! (MA) support funding National Marine Sanctuary System at these levels. Please see Appendix I for details.

While we recognize the challenges associated with providing increased funding in the current budget climate, and the need to fund other important programs under the jurisdiction of the subcommittee, we believe that the President’s FY2013 budget request fails to address critical sanctuary contributions to coastal job creation and economic growth, from supporting tourism to providing construction jobs. It also continues a deeply disturbing trend of underfunding the sanctuary program – despite nearly a decade’s worth of unmistakable signals from Democrats and Republicans in both houses of Congress that the program warrants additional funds.

National Marine Sanctuaries are Economic Engines for Coastal Communities

National marine sanctuaries support economic growth and hundreds of coastal businesses in sanctuary 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. Investing in these sites does much more than simply protect small areas of the ocean – national marine sanctuaries are economic engines for coastal communities, and investing in sanctuaries is a down payment on the future of fishing families, dive operators, and whale-watching 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
- On the shores of Lake Huron, Michigan’s Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary costs under \$1 million annually and serves as a destination for tourists who spent \$110 million visiting the three adjacent counties in 2000, providing almost \$36 million in personal income and supporting 1,700 jobs.⁴
- Taken as a whole, the National Marine Sanctuary System manages our waters at a cost to taxpayers of approximately \$340 per square mile, while management of National Park Service properties costs over \$16,000 per square mile.⁵

Investments in our National Marine Sanctuary System provide incredible returns to society, both today and for future generations, and we encourage the subcommittee to provide additional resources to sanctuaries wherever possible, enabling them to stimulate coastal economies, promote ocean recreation, and create a healthy, long-term balance on the water.

National Marine Sanctuaries Start and Stay in Local Communities

The designation and management of new sanctuaries is wholly dependent on a ‘bottom-up’ process where local communities are involved from 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. 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.

National Marine Sanctuaries’ Programmatic Outlook under Proposed FY13 Funding Levels

We remain concerned that NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) has not received sufficient appropriations for several consecutive budget cycles. As a result of these shortfalls, a consolidation with NOAA’s Marine Protected Areas Center (MPA Center), and the continued underfunding proposed for FY13, we project the termination 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 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 by guarding against illegal fishing.**
Lack of funding jeopardizes on-water patrols for illegal lobster fishermen in the Florida Keys NMS. In a single 2010 case, illegal fishermen pilfered 8,500 pounds of spiny lobster within a six-month period. The lobster had a street value of \$155,000 – money that was effectively taken out of the pockets of hardworking, legal fishermen.
- **Dramatically shrink visitor center hours.**
Visitor centers are a vital link between sanctuaries and the millions of Americans who visit the coast each year and serve as the public face of NOAA. Sanctuary visitor centers see over 200,000 visitors per year, including the Mokupāpapa Discovery Center (Hilo, HI), Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center (Alpena, MI), and Florida Keys EcoDiscovery Center (Key West, FL).
- **Eliminate cooperative education efforts with local museums that leverage private funds for taxpayer benefits.**
Placing 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 collaborative research efforts with local universities that leverage private funds for taxpayer benefits.**
Funding cuts could risk partnerships 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.
- **Dismantle successful education initiatives that save taxpayers money by focusing on low-cost prevention instead of expensive restoration or remediation.**
The Multicultural Education for Resource Issues Threatening Oceans (MERITO) program's media outreach has touched over 13 million California residents. The California Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program increases the stewardship ethic of participating

youth, and local communities in the Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico, Hawaii, New England, and Pacific Northwest have imported the program.

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 with other supporters, stakeholders, and partners of NOAA 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. NOAA is one of the premier science agencies in the federal government and provides decision makers with critically important data, products, and services that promote and enhance the nation's economy, security, environment, and quality of life. Over 1.5 million NOAA weather forecasts and warnings per year generate benefits of at least \$31.5 billion, and the agency's ocean and atmospheric research, fisheries management, and satellite enterprises are essential for the continued prosperity of our nation.⁶ For example, recovery of overfished stocks has produced an additional \$2.1 billion in income and \$5 billion in sales over the past decade.⁷ 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>.

⁴ Michigan Sea Grant. (2009). "Northeast Michigan Integrated Assessment Final Report." Available: <http://www.miseagrant.umich.edu/downloads/nemia/report/NEMIA-Final-Report.pdf>.

⁵ Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. (2011) "Sanctuary Watch, Summer 2011." U.S. Department of Commerce: NOAA National Ocean Service, National Marine Sanctuary Program. Available: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/news/pdfs/sanctuarywatch/sw0611.pdf>.

⁶ Lazo, J.K., D.M. Waldman, B.H. Morrow, and J.A. Thacher. 2010. "Assessment of Household Evacuation Decision Making and the Benefits of Improved Hurricane Forecasting." *Weather and Forecasting*. 25(1):207-219.

⁷ National Marine Fisheries Service.



March 8, 2012

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

Dear Chairman Wolf:



As Congress begins negotiations on the Fiscal Year 2013 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 \$5.495 million**; and
- **Marine Sanctuary Program Base**, within NOAA's Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) account, **at a level of \$49 million**.



We are deeply concerned by recent proposals to terminate sanctuaries' PAC account, which would likely result in multiple, unfinished construction projects including at the Gulf of the Farallones headquarters on San Francisco's Crissy Field and the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale offices in Kihei, Maui. Moreover, a lack of PAC funding will 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 spent \$126 million on commercial whale-watching trips there during 2008 alone. It is clear that sanctuaries make critical contributions to coastal job creation and economic growth, and that they do so in an incredibly cost-effective manner. Consider that ONMS cares for sanctuaries at approximately \$340 per square mile, while management of National Park Service properties costs over \$16,000 per square mile.

We remain concerned that ONMS has not received sufficient appropriations for several consecutive budget cycles. Continued underfunding in FY13 will likely result in termination 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 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.

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 \$54.5 million for sanctuaries in FY13.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We wish you all the best for the remainder of the 112th Congress.

Sincerely,

Jason Patlis
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