Implementing a Regional Structure for the National Marine Sanctuary Program

Draft Decision Document

*The limits of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone in marine waters and the International Boundary in Great Lakes waters comprise the regional boundaries

National Marine Sanctuary Program
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Implementing a Regional Structure For the National Marine Sanctuary Program

The Vision

A regional structure that better and more efficiently addresses resource management issues within an ecosystem framework, develops strategic partnerships, delivers services and programs, and protects sanctuary resources at the local, regional and national level.

1.0 Introduction

For the past several years, the National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) has taken small but calculated steps towards developing and implementing a regional structure. Several staff are currently serving as regional coordinators to help identify and implement regional priorities, the NMSP is reviewing sanctuary Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) in regional settings to better integrate programs, and the formal office elevation package to create a new Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, which is in the final stages of the approval process (see Appendix I), contains a regional structure.

This document builds upon the successes of the last few years and reflects a more deliberate strategy to fully implement a regional structure for the NMSP. It describes why a new regional structure is needed, what changes will be made to the existing organizational structure, how this new structure will function, and when it will be implemented given alternative funding scenarios. While many aspects of regionalization have been decided (e.g., hierarchy, AOP approval and reporting), many details are expected to evolve on a region-by-region basis with the full participation of the Regional Superintendents, sanctuary managers, and headquarters.

2.0 Why is a Regional Structure Needed?

Regions are not a new concept to the NMSP. Throughout the 1980s to the mid-1990s, the program operated under various regional organizational structures at the headquarters level. Due to the size of the program, including the number of sites and funding constraints at that time (see Table 2.1), a regional presence in the field was neither necessary nor practical. In the mid-1990s, the NMSP was separated from the National Estuarine Research Reserve Program and a “flattened” organizational structure was implemented to organize the program along functional branches.

2.1 A Focus on Program Integration

While this flattened structure met the program’s need at the time, it did not anticipate the growth the NMSP has experienced over the last decade. During this period, the program added new sites, increased its budget and staff, expanded community participation, and

began to address resource management issues on an ecosystem basis (see Table 2.1). As the NMSP has matured into a more proactive and strategic program, it has reached a point where it has outgrown its existing organizational structure. This existing structure does not allow or easily promote consistent decision-making or widespread program integration, nor allow the overall NMSP as a system of protected areas to capitalize on potential regional and national opportunities. The purpose of regionalization is to create a structure that will maximize program integration among the sites, regions, headquarters and other NOAA programs and partners – at all levels. A regional structure will also dedicate program leadership and staff resources directly towards integrating programs and forging partnerships.

Table 2.1 Growth of the NMSP from 1994 to 2005.

NMSP Program Area	1994	2005
Area managed	18,170.25 sq. miles	150,436.25 sq. miles
Budget	~$10.0 M*	~$61.0 M*
# of Staff (FTE & contractors)	~180	~300
# Sites undergoing Management Plan Review	0	7
# of Sanctuary Advisory Councils	4	11 (and 3 in development)
# of Facilities/Locations	16	26
# of Foundations/Assns.	2 (site only)	6 (5 site & 1 national foundation)
# of Volunteers	725	3400
Programmatic Focus	Watershed or Site-Based Management	Integrated Ecosystem-Based Management

* includes Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) and Procurement, Acquisition and Construction (PAC) funds, all estimates approximate.

2.2 Improved Coordination and Joint Programming Within NOAA and Other Agencies

A regional management structure will help fulfill a program requirement to more efficiently and consistently coordinate program activities with other federal and state agencies that already operate at a regional level (see Appendix II). NMSP regional leadership and staff will be able to represent the program at a level equal to their agency counterparts and ensure consistency both within the region and across the NMSP. This will enable a more consistent and coordinated approach to working with states that have more than one sanctuary (e.g., California). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the regional structure will allow the NMSP to be responsive to specific recommendations from the NOAA, National Ocean Service (NOS) and NMSP strategic plans, and the U.S. Oceans Commission and the Pew Oceans Commission reports which all call for greater regional integration and ecosystem-based management (see Appendix III).

In summary, the NMSP regional structure will:

- Maximize the program's intellectual and resource capital;
- Provide an improved basis for program integration with NOAA's evolving ecosystem management approach;

- Delegate authority to coordinate and integrate programs at a regional level;
- Efficiently integrate programs and assets among sites, regions and headquarters;
- Coordinate activities with other agencies at a regional and/or ecosystem level;
- Facilitate the process to identify, select and designate potential new sites;
- Pursue opportunities to develop partnerships at a regional level; and
- Increase the program's outreach efforts to regional stakeholders.

The transition of the NMSP from a flat organizational structure to a more hierarchical structure presents a challenge. The crux of this challenge is to understand the different priorities between the sites, regions and national program and find the optimal blending that maximizes NMSP efficiency over time.

3.0 How Will the Program be Organized?

Implementation of the new regional structure requires a change in the organization and reporting structure of the NMSP. As mentioned, the primary change will be from a flat to a more hierarchical structure that includes regional offices.

3.1 A Modified Organizational Structure

Figure 3.1 depicts all functional components of the proposed Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. There are no substantive changes to the structure of individual sanctuaries and only minor changes to headquarters. The most significant organizational change is the addition of regions.

3.2 Regional Offices

The regional structure establishes four regions: 1) Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes; 2) Southeast, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean; 3) West Coast; and 4) Pacific Islands (Figure 3.1). Upon full implementation, each region will be staffed by four FTE positions: a Regional Superintendent, two Regional Coordinators and an Administrative Assistant (Figure 3.2). A general description of their duties is outlined in Table 3.1. Depending upon the availability of FTE positions, a Regional Superintendent may hire contractors to fill the regional positions until FTE positions become available. Likewise, the Regional Superintendent may hire contracted staff to help implement specific regional priorities. Each region will be allocated resources and authorities to allow it to successfully address priority issues and integrate programs within and between regions.

Regional Superintendents will report to the Director of the National Marine Sanctuary Program. They will be the first-line supervisors for all regional staff and sanctuary managers and the second-line supervisors for most headquarters personnel located in that region (i.e., for individuals conducting tasks primarily within a region during a rating

Figure 3.1. NMSP Reporting Structure Following Office Elevation and Regionalization

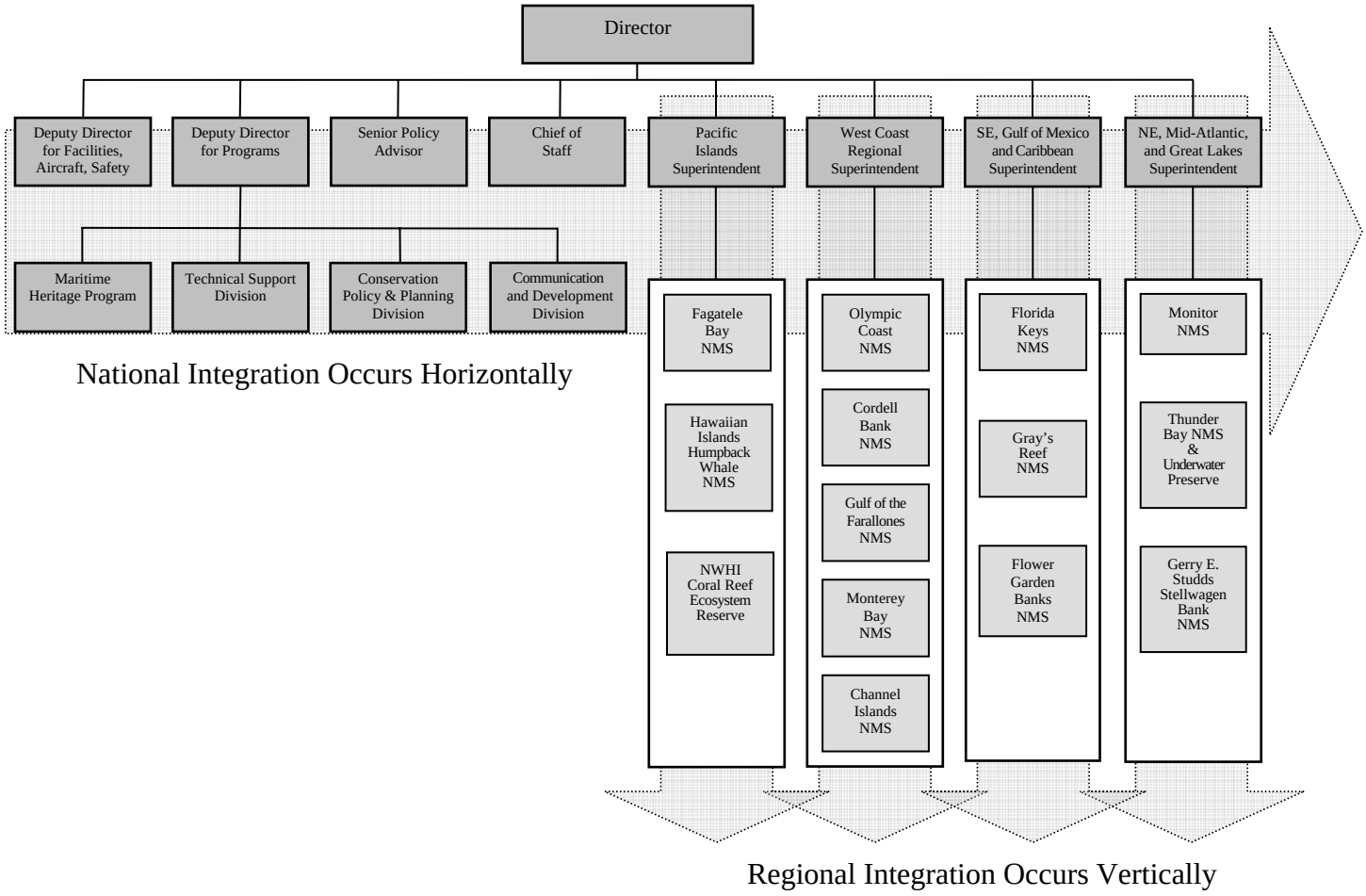
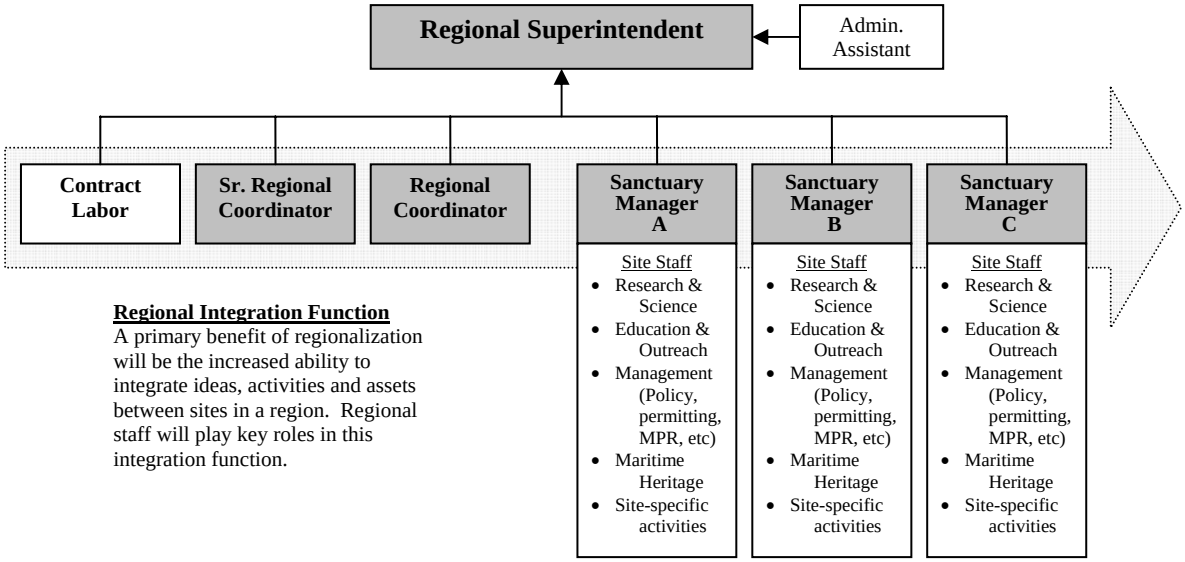


Figure 3.2 Structure of a Fully Implemented ONMS Region



period). Regional Superintendents will develop regional Annual Operating Plans (with input from the sanctuary managers), review and submit site AOPs to the Director for approval, coordinate among regional partners and agencies and obtain or disperse assets and resources to or from other regions and headquarters. Once fully implemented, regional resources will include *staff*, *budgets* (used to fund priority regional needs or contractors as necessary) and *access to other national program resources*.

This streamlined staffing structure will ensure that regional offices do not duplicate site or headquarters activities, but increase overall program coordination and integration, evolve an ecosystem-based management direction to the NMSP and streamline decision-making. Two points of clarification merit mention. First, depending on the region, the exact title and/or responsibilities of Regional Coordinators may vary. Second, each region will determine how best to use their fiscal resources, including whether or not to hire specific contract staff to support regional priorities.

Table 3.1 Summary of Core Responsibilities for Regional Staff

Title	Grade	Core Responsibilities
Regional Superintendent	GS-15	Heads the regional office. Serves as the first line supervisor to regional staff and sanctuary managers and the second line supervisor to headquarters staff and contractors based in that region. Integrates planning and budget activities between the site, regions and headquarters at LT and ET meetings. Develops regional AOP, reviews and submits site AOPs to the Director for approval. Reviews headquarters division AOPs and provides recommendations to the Director. Facilitates new site designation in region. Participates in the scheduling of management plan reviews. Facilitates the development of regional biogeographic characterizations. Serves as senior NMSP official in region and is responsible for coordinating with other regional entities and regional Congressional liaison activities.
Senior Regional Coordinator	GS-13/14	The Regional Superintendent will determine the scope of work for this position, in consultation with sanctuary managers and headquarters. This position is a senior Regional Coordinator and will directly assist the Regional Superintendent to implement regional strategies and activities.
Regional Coordinator	GS-12/13	The Regional Superintendent will determine the scope of work for this position, in consultation with sanctuary managers and headquarters. This position is a Regional Coordinator and will assist the Regional Superintendent to implement regional strategies and activities.
Administrative Assistant	~GS-6/7	Handles broad array of administrative functions, such as tracking regional budget, supporting development of regional budget and AOP, processing travel orders and vouchers, and serving as timekeeper.
Regional Contractors	Contract	Regions may hire contractors to help implement or meet regional priorities.

3.3 National Divisions and Programs

There will be minor changes to the organizational structure of headquarters in the proposed Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (Figure 3.1). The existing branches will become divisions and the branch chiefs will become division chiefs. The division chiefs will report to the Deputy Director for Programs. The Conservation, Policy and Planning Branch and the Communications and Development branch will retain their current titles, while the National Programs Branch will become the Technical Support Division. Additionally, the recently created Maritime Heritage Program will become a division. Most headquarters staff with duty stations outside of Silver Spring will continue to function in their current capacities. However, the Regional Superintendents will become second line supervisors for most of these personnel (i.e., for individuals conducting tasks primarily within a region during a rating period). This will allow the Regional Superintendent to participate in the work-plan development and evaluation of regionally-based headquarters staff.

3.4 Sanctuary Sites

There will be no change to the organizational structure of the sites, except that sanctuary managers will report to a Regional Superintendent as their first line supervisor instead of the Director of the NMSP.

4.0 How Will the Program Function?

This section provides a general description of how the NMSP will function and operate within the new regional management structure. In particular, it describes the priorities of staff and the distribution of resources at sites, regions, and headquarters. The "Spheres of Ownership" table in Appendix IV provides a more detailed description of specific areas of responsibility between the program levels.

Though much thought has gone into planning how the new structure would ideally function, it is recognized that many details of how regionalization will actually work will evolve and be refined over time as site, regional, and headquarters staff begin to address issues within this new program structure.

4.1 Site Priorities and Resources

The new regional structure will have minimal impact on the priorities and operations at individual sanctuaries. The site manager and staff will continue to focus primarily on those management issues and activities that directly pertain to the conservation and protection of the sanctuary's resources. While the scope of issues and solutions affecting the management of the site may extend beyond the site's physical boundaries, the primary responsibility of the site will remain focused on achieving its specific goals and objectives. Largely, this will be accomplished through the development of partnerships to help implement the site's management plan and Annual Operating Plan. The site staff will continue to oversee their Sanctuary Advisory Councils, implement resource

protection, research and education programs, enhance stewardship and local awareness about the sanctuary, and serve as the liaison with local media and Congressional district offices. It is important that sanctuary managers and staff maintain "ownership" of site constituents, issues, challenges, opportunities, and successes. Sanctuary managers and staff will continue to be involved in other regional or national priority activities as appropriate.

The regional management structure will have little change, if any, on the allocation of site-specific resources. Each sanctuary manager will continue to be responsible for his or her own staff, budget, facilities and assets. Site resources will continue to be allocated through the Annual Operating Plan process, which will now require input and evaluation from the Regional Superintendent and staff. In addition to their site-specific resources, sanctuary managers will be able to request additional resources from the Regional Superintendent, in terms of staff, technical support, equipment or funding to address site needs. They may also enlist the region to petition additional resources from headquarters.

4.2 Regional Priorities and Resources

The most significant organizational change is the creation of the four regions, with dedicated staff to address regional priorities and issues. For the first time in the program's history, Regional Superintendents and staff will have "ownership" over a different set of issues and on a different scale than either the sites or the headquarters divisions (see Appendix IV). The regional staff will be based in the region and will dedicate their efforts towards addressing priority regional issues and capitalizing on regional opportunities and partnerships. They will help provide a coordinated and unified voice with constituents, agencies and partners as described above (Section 3.2).

The success of the regional structure depends on the regions having a common set of responsibilities, but also having the flexibility to address the most pressing issues. The priorities of each region will therefore vary. For example, at any given time, one region may concentrate on partnership-building, while another region may focus on new site development, and another on interagency coordination.

4.3 Headquarters Priorities and Resources

The functions and responsibilities of headquarters divisions will largely remain the same. Headquarters staff will continue to focus on issues, constituents and partnerships at the national level and provide technical assistance, guidelines, protocols, and support to individual sites and regions as overall program priorities dictate. More specifically, the divisions fulfill these responsibilities through managing implementation of national program priorities, overseeing the NMSP budget, managing the overall AOP process, by leading cross-cutting national programs such as research, education, maritime heritage and management plan review, and serving as the nexus to coordinate legislative and media outreach efforts. However, as the regional management structure evolves, periodic

reviews of the balance of functions across sites, regions and headquarters divisions will be conducted to ensure that maximum overall efficiency and effectiveness is achieved.

4.4 National Programs and Assets: A Mix of Shared Responsibilities and Ownership

Many functions and activities in the NMSP cannot be cleanly placed in the site, regional, or headquarters "boxes." They are cross-cutting activities which require shared responsibilities and shared ownership. For example, a sanctuary management issue may first arise as a site-specific concern, but has implications beyond the site. Similarly, the development of policies in response to site issues that have the potential to affect more than one site must involve the sites, regions and headquarters. Depending on the nature and context of the issue, the site, region or headquarters may be the most appropriate to lead in framing the issue, organizing meetings, and writing decision documents.

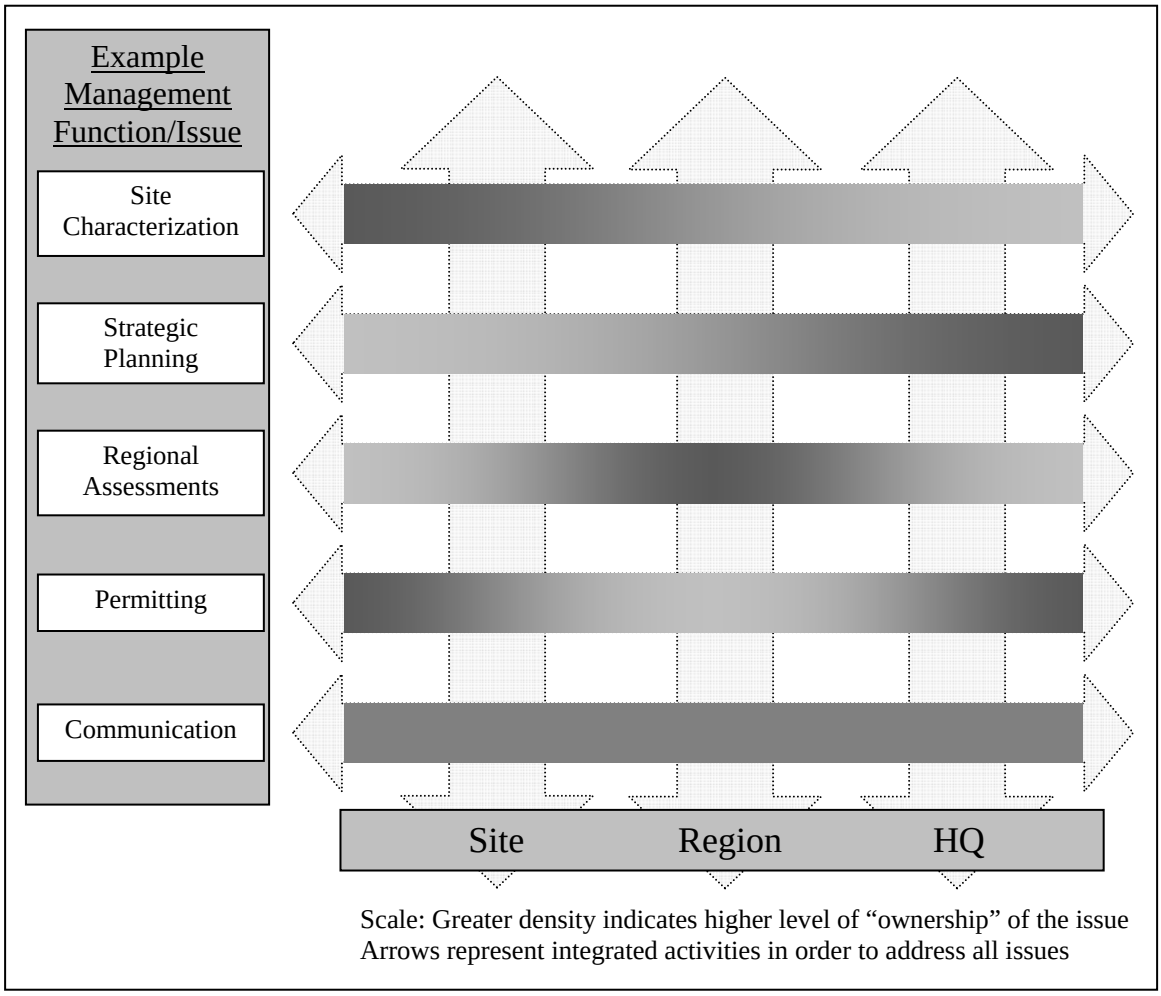
The NMSP also has cross-cutting programs for education, research and maritime heritage (Section 4.3). Each of these cross-cutting programs has headquarters staff to facilitate and coordinate efforts across the program and to integrate staff and activities between the sites and headquarters (e.g., annual meetings, conference calls, AOP review). This type of integration, which has been very successful in building cohesive programs, will be expanded upon and modified to include explicit regional participation elements, as appropriate. The participation of regional staff in these activities will enhance and integrate activities between cross-cutting programs.

Personnel reporting to headquarters divisions (FTE or contractors) may be located either at headquarters or in the field. Headquarters personnel located in the field will remain under headquarters supervision, working on national programs and activities. However, these individuals will also have Regional Superintendents as their second-line supervisor, thereby ensuring an explicit integration of planning and performance review. The Regional Superintendent may request to utilize these headquarters staff on a project or task-specific basis to address regional concerns and/or augment high priority site activities. The Regional Superintendents will be the points-of-contact for regions or sites to request access to these resources through the AOP process.

4.5 Spectrum of Ownership

Although the spheres of ownership table (see Appendix IV) defines the aspects of various activities that sites, regions and headquarters will focus on, in reality there is considerable overlap. Figure 4.1 depicts the concept that for each management function or issue there is a range of involvement by different levels within the NMSP. For example, for activities involving site characterization, the site has the major responsibility and headquarters has the least. Conversely, headquarters has the lead role in strategic planning, with the sites and regions participating as appropriate. Within each operating unit across all issues (e.g. sanctuary, region, division) and across each issue, the key to success is the maximized integration of ideas, resources and activities.

Figure 4.1 Relative level of "ownership" of an issue



Section 4.6 Expanding the Leadership Circle

The regional management structure adds an important dimension to the existing NMSP Leadership Team. The management and decision making processes of the program will be evolved to incorporate the Regional Superintendents into a new "Executive Team" to maximize leadership assets within the program. The **Executive Team (ET)** will consist of the Director of the NMSP, Deputy Directors, Senior Policy Advisors, Chief of Staff, Regional Superintendents, and Division Chiefs. The **Leadership Team (LT)** will consist of the Executive Team and the Sanctuary Managers. The **Regional Leadership Teams (RLTs)** will consist of Regional Superintendents, Regional Coordinators, and Sanctuary Managers. In this structure, the Regional Superintendents serve as a nexus between the sites and headquarters by participating in the ET, the LT and the RLTs. Table 4.1 presents a proposed schedule for how these teams may operate throughout an annual cycle.

Table 4.1 Executive, Regional Leadership, and Leadership Team Activities

Month	Jan				Feb				Mar				Apr				May				Jun			
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
ET call	✔				✔				✔				✔				✔				✔			
Regional LT call			✔			✔								✔						✔		✔		
LT call			✔				✔				✔				✔				✔				✔	
ET meeting		a																				d		
Regional LT meeting					a													c						
LT meeting										b														
Month	Jul				Aug				Sep				Oct				Nov				Dec			
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
ET call	✔				✔				✔				✔				✔				✔			
Regional LT call		✔								✔				✔				✔				✔		
LT call			✔				✔				✔				✔				✔				✔	
ET meeting						d																f		
Regional LT meeting				c																				
LT meeting												e												

a: AOP Planning Meeting
b: Program Managers Meeting
c: AOP Development Meeting
d:AOP Review/Evaluation Meeting
e: Fall LT Meeting
f: Budget Allocation Meeting

ET: Director, Deputy Directors, Senior Policy Advisors, Chief of Staff, Regional Superintendents, Divisions Chiefs
Regional LT: Regional Superintendent and site managers from region
LT: ET plus site managers

5.0 Key Protocols for NMSP Operations

Operating in a regional management structure requires a mindset shift away from the status quo. Quite simply, the program cannot continue to operate in the same way or this new approach to integration will not be effective or efficient. The protocols described below have been developed from our existing processes, and provide the guidance and procedures to move into the new management structure. Even so, however, these protocols will require further discussion and will also evolve over time.

The first step toward implementation will be to fully examine these protocols with site, regional, and headquarters staff and test them within each region. All NMSP staff at all levels, both FTEs and contractors, must exercise common sense in their approach to developing and implementing the protocols. Above all, effective communication between all NMSP staff is critical, especially during transition.

5.1 The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) Process

The program-wide development of Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) is a cornerstone of success for the NMSP. This process has evolved each year to reflect the changing

NOAA budget formulation requirements, and it serves as the basis for the NMSP's budgeting, resource allocation, and reporting decisions. While the AOP process has been a successful planning and operational tool for the NMSP, the new regional structure provides an opportunity for sites, regions and headquarters to better coordinate their activities during the planning process. There will be a clearer process for requesting staff resources and assets during the fiscal year. In short, the AOP process will become a more valuable tool for the NMSP to plan projects and allocate staff resources among the sites, regions, headquarters divisions and cross-cutting programs (see Appendix V for a flow chart of the AOP process).

The Executive Team (ET) will have a key integrating function in AOP development and implementation. The ET has the responsibility to ensure that site, regions, headquarters and cross-cutting programs coordinate their activities. For each AOP planning cycle, the Strategic Planning Team will develop the annual budget guidance for the coming fiscal year based on the results of the January ET meeting and recommendations from the regions and cross-cutting programs. Following the budget guidance, ET members will facilitate the exchange of information required to coordinate activities via conference calls and regional LT meetings. After the final annual budget is received from NOAA, the ET will meet to provide budget allocation recommendations to the Director.

As is the case now, sites will have considerable discretion in preparing and implementing their AOPs. The two major differences in the AOP process that will begin in Phase II of regional implementation (see Table 6.1) are that: (1) sites and regions will meet before the AOP is drafted to identify emerging issues, prioritize projects and identify resource requirements, and (2) sites will submit their draft and final AOPs to the Regional Superintendent for review and recommendation to the Director. The most important role of the regional review is to identify resources to share, evaluate opportunities for partnerships, and ensure that complete and consistent AOPs are submitted to headquarters for approval. This will provide a level of interaction, priority setting and review not currently undertaken. It will also ensure that regional and national program priorities and milestones are addressed, to the extent possible, within site AOPs.

The Regional Superintendents will prepare AOPs that identify explicit regional priorities and activities to support them including resource requirements. These AOPs are developed in coordination with sanctuary managers and headquarters and submitted to the Director for approval. The headquarters division AOPs (including the cross-cutting programs) will describe national program activities and will include an allocation of staff time dedicated to site and regional activities. The development of these AOPs is coordinated by the Deputy Director for Programs, who will give the Regional Superintendents an opportunity to review, and then submit them to the Director for approval.

5.2 Allocation of Program Assets

Program assets, personnel, facilities, and fiscal resources exist at sites, regions and headquarters. The AOP process is the mechanism that is used to allocate these assets

according to program priorities and requirements. Within the process, sites, regions and headquarters divisions can also make specific requests for additional resources or adjustments as the year proceeds. Not all program requirements can be accurately forecasted or anticipated; however, all these requests must be considered in terms of their impacts on AOPs.

5.3 Decision-making

Currently, the sanctuary managers and/or staff make most sanctuary-specific resource management decisions at the site level (e.g., permit applications). As the program matures, however, certain decisions or policies may need to be elevated to the region or headquarters level to ensure consistent policies and decisions are made across regions. Regional Superintendents will help ensure the resolution of such issues in a more efficient and consistent manner. The criteria or threshold for elevation to headquarters will depend upon on the specific issue: its complexity, whether it may affect other sites and/or regions, and how much controversy it may generate. Further discussions are needed among the Leadership Team to develop specific criteria for elevating decisions from a site to a region and from a region to the national program level. However, in the interim, a "yes" to any of the following would provide a trigger for sanctuary managers to discuss the issue with the Regional Superintendent:

- Has implications for other sites;
- Modifies or alters the interpretation of an existing sanctuary policy;
- Results in the creation of a new sanctuary policy;
- Involves other parts of NOAA or other federal and state agencies; or
- Has the potential to spark controversy with the public, user groups, media, or congressional staff.

Similarly, Regional Superintendents will elevate issues and opportunities utilizing similar criteria.

6.0 Implementation of the Regional Structure

While the office elevation package is still in the final stage of the approval process, the NMSP will continue to move toward a regional structure. Nevertheless, when the final elevation decision is made, it will take time to fully implement the new management structure. Full implementation is contingent on several considerations:

- **Formal authorization of office-level elevation.** Although some regional activities will begin (see Section 6.1), the reporting structure of the NMSP will remain as it is until office elevation is formally authorized (see Appendix I). Once the elevation has been authorized, the new Office of National Marine Sanctuaries will move to Phase III of its regional implementation plan (Table 6.1).

- **Available funding.** Regional implementation is dependent on available funding. Currently, the regions have modest budgets and National Program Priority funds may be used to further the implementation process, if necessary. It is important to note that neither sites nor headquarters divisions will endure a budget decrease to implement regionalization. However, since regional implementation is a high priority, future increases in program funding will be prioritized accordingly.

- **Availability of FTEs.** In order to fully staff the regions as described, the NMSP will need to obtain additional FTEs. Some relief in this area is expected following office-level elevation. The first four new FTEs will be used to create the Regional Superintendent positions. The next 6 to 10 FTEs will be used to fill one Regional Coordinator position per region and the site FTE needs of highest priority. Overall priorities will be decided based on a planned labor analysis to be undertaken. Until FTEs are available for the regional positions, Regional Superintendents will have the flexibility to fill those positions with contract labor.

6.1 A Phased Approach

Implementation of the regional management structure must be a phased process (see Table 6.1). Currently, the NMSP is considered to be in Phase I of regional implementation. This phase includes regional activities such as intra- and inter-regional integration efforts, the early phases of large-scale assessment projects and the establishment of regional priorities. Phase II begins at the conclusion of the January 2005 Leadership Team meeting. At that time, the new Executive Team and Leadership Team activities will begin (see Table 4.1) and the expanded AOP planning and review process will be initiated. Many of the changes described in this document regarding personnel, supervision, and formal AOP approval and reporting will begin in Phase III. Consequently, the timing of office elevation, funding (see Table 6.2) and the availability of FTEs will determine the pace of regional implementation.

Table 6.1 Phases of Implementation

Phase	Trigger	Regional Personnel
I	Current phase	Acting Regional Superintendents are dual-hatted as sanctuary managers. Regions may or may not have staff.
II	Begins Jan 17, 2005	ET, RLT and LT activities schedule begins (see Table 4.1)
III	Formal authorization of office elevation.	Acting Regional Superintendents work full-time in regional role. Site manager duties are filled by acting managers. At least one additional regional staff is present.
IV	FTEs available for Regional Superintendent positions	Regional Superintendent FTEs are competed and hired. Core regional positions are fully staffed by FTEs (as available) or contract labor during this phase.
V	Regions have all necessary FTEs and funds to conduct regional activities	All core regional FTE positions are competed and hired. Contract labor to conduct activities deemed regional priorities are hired.

Table 6.2 provides approximate estimates of the costs to implement a regional management structure based upon a four FTE staff model. In reality, each region will have different costs and implementation will occur at different rates depending upon specific regional issues and program priorities. The table does, however, provide reasonable approximation of the resource requirements for a phased implementation.

Table 6.2 Estimated Costs of Regional Implementation Needs by Phases

Needs	Phase I		Phase II		Phase III		Phase IV		Phase V	
	Assets	**$K**	**Assets**	**$K**	**Assets**	**$K**	**Assets**	**$K**	**Assets**	**$K**
Personnel	1	150	1	150	2	300	3	450	4	600
Admin & Operations (travel, vehicles, utilities, rent, etc.)	Not every region has an office	15	Increased travel costs for ET activities	45	Regions formally established	75	Regional activities "ramping up"	100	All regions established and fully staffed	120
Contract Staff	0	0	0	0	1	100	1.5	150	2	200
Project Funds	Support cross-cut site efforts	155	Support cross-cut site efforts	155	Support site and regional needs	250	Implement regional projects	450	Implement regional projects	700
Total per region		320		350		725		1,150		1,620
Total for 4 regions	**$1,280K**		**$1,400K**		**$2,900K**		**$4,600K**		**$6,480K**	

6.2 Evaluation of the Regional Structure

Although the NMSP has been evolving into a regional structure, a period of growth and adaptation will be required. Sites, regions, and headquarters will ultimately be involved in drafting new procedures for how the restructured NMSP will operate. Periodic and systematic review of the regional structure by the NMSP as a whole will be essential to take advantage of opportunities to improve overall program integration, and maximize program effectiveness in ecosystem-based partnership structure.

7.0 Conclusion

As the use of marine protected areas continues to increase, the National Marine Sanctuary Program will become more prominent as the national leader in the application and management of this emerging management tool. In that context, the implementation of a regional structure for the NMSP takes on even greater need and importance. Implementation of a regional management structure will, therefore, enable the NMSP to:

- Maximize the program's intellectual and resource capital;
- Provide an improved basis for program integration with NOAA's evolving ecosystem management approach;

- Delegate authority to coordinate and integrate programs at a regional level;
- Efficiently integrate programs and assets among sites, regions and headquarters;
- Coordinate activities with other agencies at a regional and/or ecosystem level;
- Facilitate the process to identify, select and designate potential new sites;
- Pursue opportunities to develop partnerships at a regional level; and
- Increase the program's outreach efforts to regional stakeholders.

Finally, implementation of this regional management structure will enable the NMSP to help meet the challenges presented by the U.S. Oceans Commission and Pew Oceans Commission.

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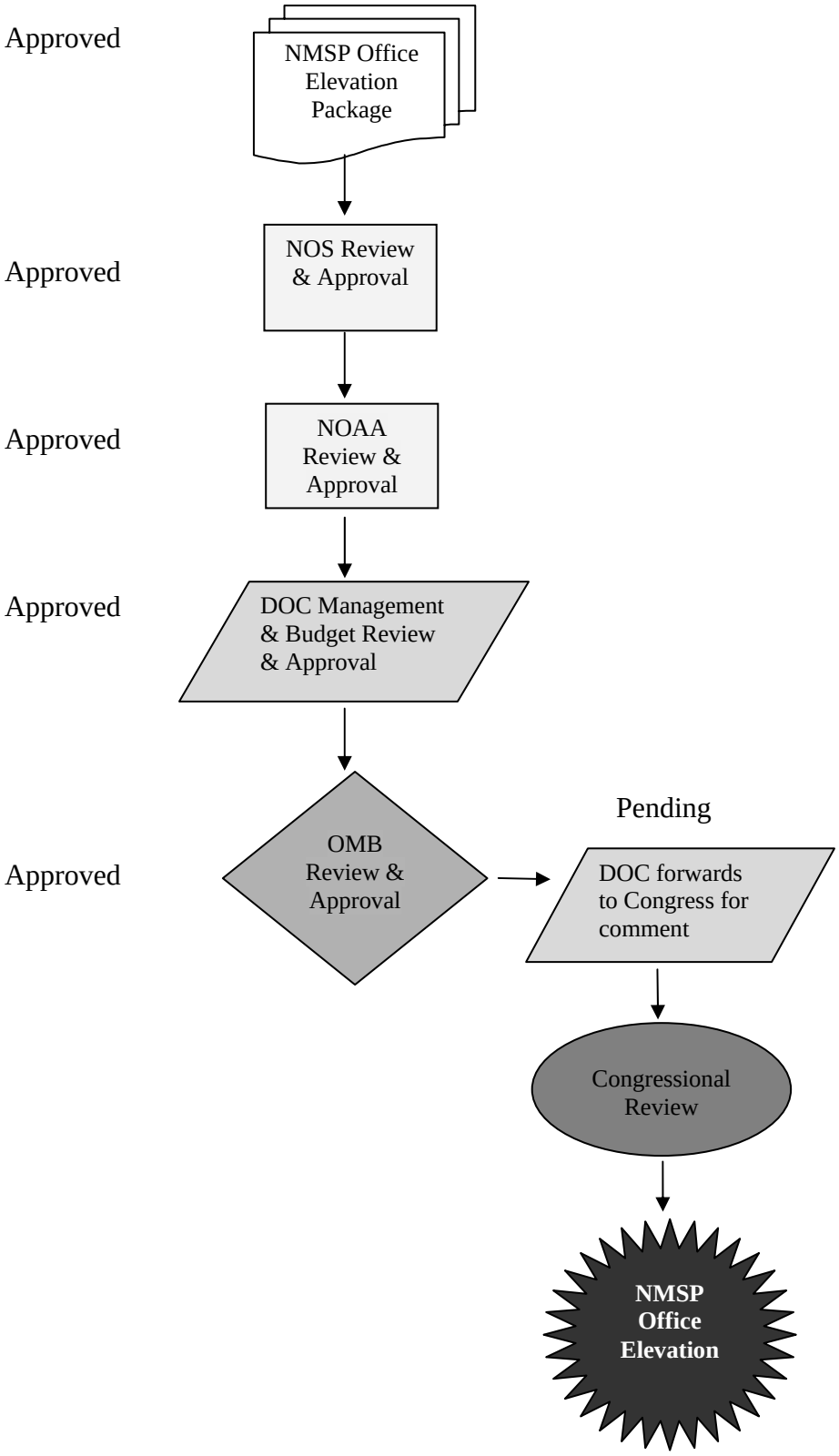
Appendix I. NMSP Office Elevation Approval Process



Appendix II. Regional Comparison of the NMSP to other Federal Entities

FEDERAL ENTITIES REGIONAL JURISDICTIONS									
ONMS Regions	**NMS Sites**	**MMS Regions**	**NMFS Regions**	**FMC Regions**	**EPA Regions**	**NPS Regions**	**FWS Regions**	**USGS Regions**	**NWS Regions**
Northeast, Mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes	TBNMS&UP	N/A	N/A	N/A	Region 5	Mid-West	Region 3: Great Lakes-Big Rivers	Eastern	Central
	SBNMS	Atlantic OCS	Northeast	New England	Region 1: Northeast	Northeast	Region 5: Northeast		Eastern
	MNMS			Mid-Atlantic	Region 4: Southeast	Southeast	Region 4: Southeast		
Southeast, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean	GRNMS		Southeast	South Atlantic					Southern
	FKNMS	Gulf of Mexico OCS		South Atlantic & Gulf of Mexico					
	FGBNMS			Gulf of Mexico	Region 6: South Central	Intermountain	Region 3: Southwest	Central	
West Coast	CINMS	Pacific OCS	Southwest	Pacific	Region 9: Pacific Southwest	Pacific West	Region 1: Pacific	Pacific	Western
	MBNMS								
	GFNMS								
	CBNMS								
	OCNMS		Northwest		Region 10: Pacific Northwest				
Pacific Islands	FBNMS		Pacific Islands	Western Pacific	Region 9: Pacific Southwest				Pacific
	HIHWNMS								
	NWHICRER								

NMS Site Abbreviations	NMS Site Proper Names
TBNMS&UP	Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve
SBNMS	Gerry E. Studds National Marine Sanctuary
MNMS	Monitor National Marine Sanctuary
GRNMS	Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary
FKNMS	Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
FGBNMS	Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary
CINMS	Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
MBNMS	Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
GFNMS	Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary
CBNMS	Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary
OCNMS	Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary
FBNMS	Fagatele Bay National Marine Sanctuary
HIHWNMS	Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary
NWHICRER	Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve

Federal Abbreviations	Federal Entity Proper Names
MMS	Minerals Management Service
NMFS	NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
FMC	Fisheries Management Councils
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
NPS	National Park Service
FWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
NWS	NOAA National Weather Service

Appendix III. Selected Language from Commissioned Reports and Strategic Plans.

The following appendix contains specific excerpts from various Presidential Executive Orders, Commission Reports, and strategic plans, which all provide a clear connection to the need for more integrated regional ecosystem management. The NMSP regional management structure was developed, in part, to be responsive to these policies, plans and recommendations.

Presidential Executive Order: Committee on Ocean Policy
December 17, 2004

Section 1. Policy. It shall be the policy of the United States to:

(a) coordinate the activities of executive departments and agencies regarding ocean-related matters in an integrated and effective manner to advance the environmental, economic, and security interests of present and future generations of Americans; and

(b) facilitate, as appropriate, coordination and consultation regarding ocean-related matters among Federal, State, tribal, local governments, the private sector, foreign governments, and international organizations.

United States Oceans Commission: Recommendations contained with the report "An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century," delivered to the President and Congress on September 20, 2004

Chapter 5: Advancing a Regional Approach
Recommendation 5–1. The National Ocean Council should work with Congress, the President's Council of Advisors on Ocean Policy, and state, territorial, tribal, and local leaders, including representatives from the private sector, nongovernmental organizations and academia, to develop a flexible and voluntary process for the creation of regional ocean councils. States, working with relevant stakeholders, should use this process to establish regional ocean councils, with support from the National Ocean Council.

Recommendation 5–2. The President, through an executive order, should direct all federal agencies with ocean- and coastal-related functions to immediately improve their regional coordination and increase their outreach efforts to regional stakeholders.

Recommendation 5–3. The President should form a task force of federal resource management agencies to develop a proposal for adoption and implementation of common federal regional boundaries. The task force should solicit input from state, territorial, tribal, and local representatives.

Recommendation 5–5. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), working with other appropriate federal and regional entities, should coordinate the development of regional ecosystem assessments, to be updated periodically.

Chapter 6: Coordinating Management in Federal Waters
Recommendation 6–2. Congress, working with the National Ocean Council (NOC) and regional ocean councils, should establish a balanced, ecosystem-based offshore management regime that sets forth guiding principles for the coordination of offshore activities, including a policy that requires a reasonable portion of the resource rent derived from such activities to be returned to the public.

Recommendation 6–4. To create effective and enforceable marine protected areas, regional ocean councils and appropriate federal, regional, state, and local entities, should work together on marine protected area design, implementation, and evaluation. Planners should follow the process developed by the National Ocean Council, actively soliciting stakeholder input and participation.

Pew Oceans Commission: Recommendations from "America's Living Oceans" Final Report, June 4, 2003

Priority objectives: Encourage comprehensive and coordinated governance of ocean resources and uses at scales appropriate to the problems to be solved.

- The regional scale of large marine ecosystems is most appropriate for fisheries management and for governance generally.

Governance for Sustainable Seas

- Establish regional ocean ecosystem councils to develop and implement enforceable regional ocean governance plans.

Restoring America's Fisheries

- Implement ecosystem-based planning and marine zoning.
- Restructure fishery management institutions and reorient fisheries policy to protect and sustain the ecosystems on which our fisheries depend.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Strategic Plan FY2005 - FY2010

Goal 1: Protect, Restore, and Manage the Use of Coastal and Ocean Resources through an Ecosystem Approach to Management

Ecosystem Strategies

- Engage and collaborate with our partners to achieve regional objectives by delineating regional ecosystems, forming regional ecosystem councils, and implementing cooperative strategies to improve regional ecosystem health.

- Manage uses of ecosystems by applying scientifically sound observations, assessments, and research findings to ensure the sustainable use of resources and to balance competing uses of coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Improve resource management by advancing our understanding of ecosystems through better simulation and predictive models. Build and advance the capabilities of an ecological component of the NOAA global environmental observing system to monitor, assess, and predict national and regional ecosystem health, as well as to gather information consistent with established social and economic indicators.
- Develop coordinated regional and national outreach and education efforts to improve public understanding and involvement in stewardship of coastal and marine ecosystems.

NOAA's Ocean Service Strategic Plan, FY2005 – FY2010

Goal 1: Protect, restore and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through ecosystem-based management.

Objective A: Protect, Restore and Manage the Use of Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lake Resources

NOS will continue to provide healthy coastal ecosystems by managing human uses of natural resources so that economic development is conducted in ways that maintain ecosystem diversity and long-term productivity. NOS will accomplish this objective through focused research, monitoring of coastal ecosystems, assessment and restoration of injured habitats, development and delivery of spatial information and other tools and technologies for decision makers, training and technology transfer to build improved state and local management capacity, and information to increase public understanding and stewardship of marine and coastal resources.

NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program Strategic Plan
FY2005 – FY2010 (Draft 11/19/04)

Goal 1: Identify, designate, and manage sanctuaries to protect nationally significant resources and qualities through innovative, coordinated, and community-based measures and techniques.

- **Objective 1:** Prepare sanctuary-specific management plans and regional and national programs and policies that utilize all program capacities to protect and manage resources.
- **Objective 4:** Review and evaluate the NMSP's effectiveness at site, regional, and national levels, through both internal and external mechanisms.

Goal 2: Build and strengthen the nation-wide system of marine sanctuaries, maintain and enhance the role of the NMSP's system in larger MPA networks, and help provide both

national and international leadership for MPA management and marine resource stewardship.

- **Objective 1:** Develop and conduct a new Site Evaluation List analysis and participation process to identify potential new sites, in coordination, to the most practical extent, with community, regional, national, and international efforts.
- **Objective 2:** Designate new sanctuaries, as appropriate, to ensure the nation's marine ecosystems and networks achieve national expectations for sustainability.
- **Objective 3:** Coordinate and participate in ecosystem-based and network initiatives and projects at the regional, national, and international levels.
- **Objective 4:** Develop and maintain interagency partnerships and collaborations, particularly with other national and international protected area and resource managers.

Goal 7: Build, maintain, and enhance an operational capability and infrastructure that efficiently and effectively support the attainment of the NMSP's mission and goals.

- **Objective 2:** Implement a regional management structure to integrate marine sanctuaries into region-based ecosystem frameworks for the NMSP.

NOAA's National Marine Protected Area Center Strategic Plan
November 2004

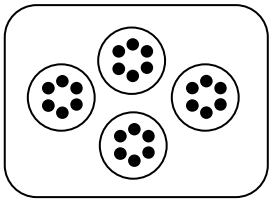
Goal 3: Facilitate International, National and Regional Coordination of MPA Activities.

Objective 1: Coordinate among federal, state, tribal, and local agencies to support MPA national system and stewardship goals.

Objective 2: Foster regional coordination of agencies and stakeholders to support the National System of MPAs and stewardship goals.

Appendix IV. NMSP Activities - Spheres of Ownership Across the Organization

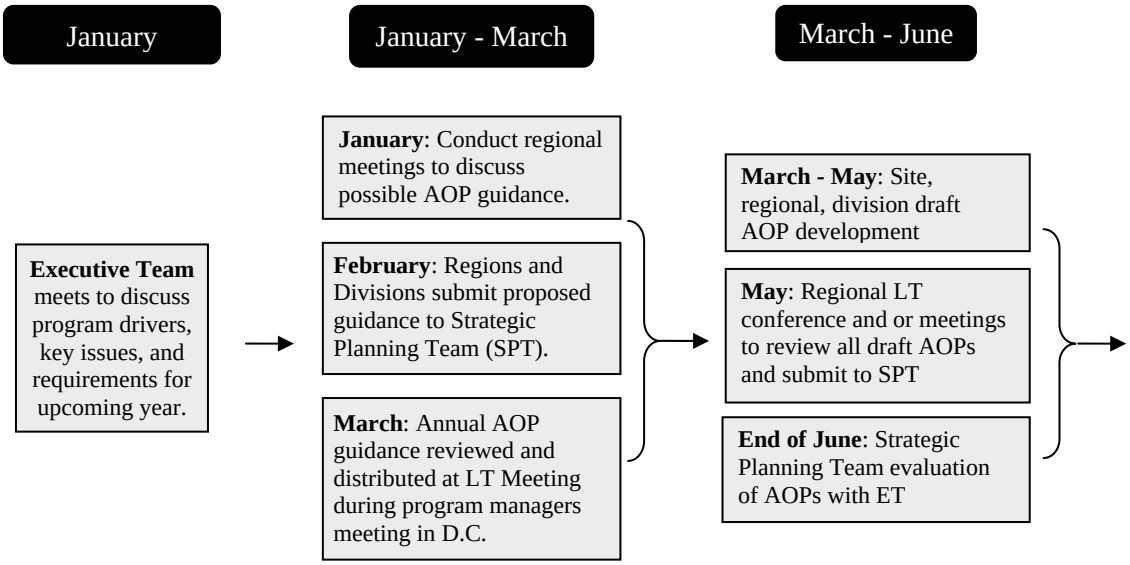
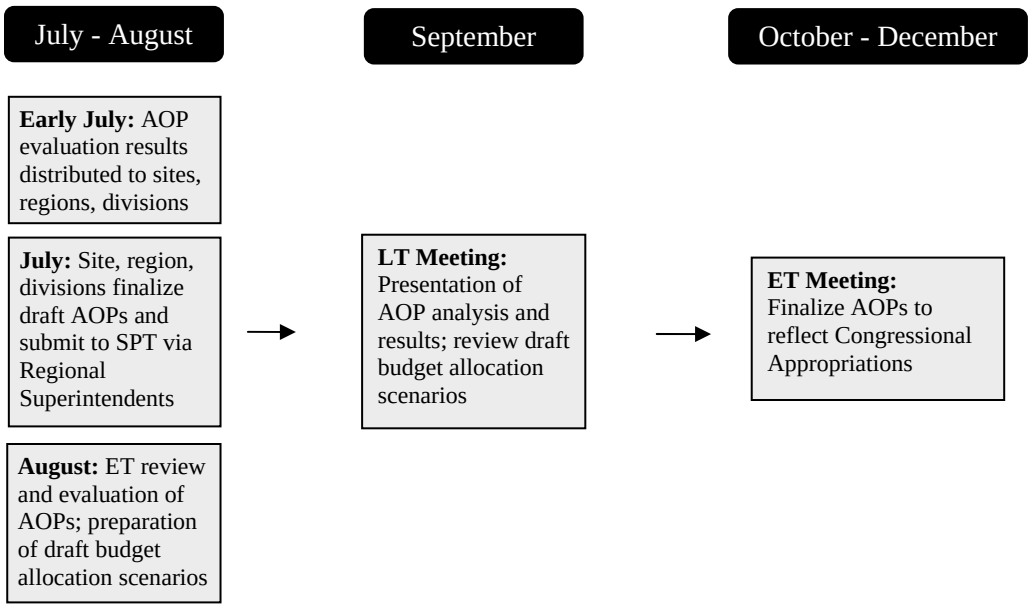
The following table is intended to clarify the different "spheres of ownership" or areas of responsibility between the NMSP site, region and national level. While there may be specific issues or activities that a site, region or the national program may take the lead on, in reality there is overlap and each level may play a role in addressing the issue or activity.

Issue/Activity	Site	Region	National
Geography	• Defined by Sanctuary boundary. • May include adjacent ecosystems and watersheds that influence the site. 	• Defined by larger-scale biogeographic and/or geopolitical areas. • Contains multiple sanctuaries. • Includes adjacent ecosystems and watersheds that influence the region. • May encompass areas suitable for future sanctuary consideration. 	• Defined by all the various marine and coastal regions and Great Lakes in the US Exclusive Economic Zone. 
Priority Focus	• Issues and programs affecting an individual sanctuary. • Ensure that site-specific, regional, and national policies and priorities are implemented at a site.	• Issues and programs common to or affecting all sanctuaries in the region. • Ensure that national and regional policies and priorities are implemented at the sites within a region.	• Issues and programs affecting all HQ branches, regions and sanctuaries. • Ensure that national policies and priorities are implemented throughout the program.
Assets	• Site staff. • Site resources. • Site partnerships. • Access to regional and national staff and resources.	• Regional staff. • Regional resources. • Regional partnerships. • Access to site staff and national staff and resources.	• National staff. • National resources. • National partnerships. • Access to site and regional staff.

Issue/Activity	Site	Region	National
Asset Allocation	• Develop site AOP that may include use of site, regional and national assets. • Sites work with region to coordinate and request regional and national assets.	• Develop regional AOP that may include use of site, regional and national assets. • Regions coordinate individual site and regional requests for regional and national assets. • Regions coordinate and request national assets to be used in region or site.	• Develop national program (division) AOPs that may include use of site, regional and national assets. • Respond to regional requests for use of national assets.
Annual Operating Plans (AOPs – see Appendix V)	• Joint AOP pre-planning for site and regional AOPs. • Develop site AOPs, submit to regions for review. • Identify regional and national assets for site needs.	• Joint AOP pre-planning. • Develop regional AOP. • Evaluate and review site AOPs and submit to headquarters. • Identify national assets for regional needs. • Evaluate site AOP milestones.	• Develop annual AOP guidance for entire program. • Develop branch AOPs. • Consolidate site, regional, and branch AOPs. • Look across regions from national perspective to identify assets, issues, etc. • Director evaluates and approves site, branch and regional AOPs.
Partnerships	• Partnerships to help implement a sanctuary management plan or AOP (to protect local sanctuary resources). • Local NGOs, research, education, & local/state /federal resource mgmt. agencies (e.g., Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association, Hawaii DLNR).	• Partnerships that focus on regional resource protection issues and that ultimately benefit multiple sites. • State and federal resource mgmt. agencies, regional NGO and stakeholder groups (e.g., regional fishery mgmt. councils, CA Resources Agency, EPA Region).	• Partnerships that support the entire national program. • Federal and Intl. resource management agencies, national corporations, national NGOs and industry associations (e.g., National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, National Geographic, DOI/Natl. Park Service).
Sponsorships	• Support individual programs and activities at a sanctuary (e.g., Gulf of Mexico Foundation).	• Support regional resource management efforts or programs that can be implemented at multiple sites (e.g., Packard Foundation's support of SIMoN which will evolve into a regional network).	• Support the mission of national program and those projects or activities that can be exported throughout the system. Targeted to larger national donors and corporations (e.g., Discovery, Univision, Mead Corporation).
Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)	• Agreement between an individual sanctuary and other entities (e.g., MNMS and The Mariners Museum).	• Agreement between the region (on behalf of sites) and other regional entities (e.g., West Coast Region and the Pacific Fishery Management. Council).	• Agreement between the NMSP and other national entities (e.g., NMSP and USGS or NMSP and AZA).

Issue/Activity	Site	Region	National
Interagency Coordination	• Coordination with appropriate local, state or federal agencies to address site-specific resource management issues (e.g., FBNMS and American Samoa CZM program).	• Coordination with appropriate state or federal agencies to address regional resource management issues (e.g., FKNMS & FGBNMS with other Gulf of Mexico/Caribbean coral reef initiatives).	• Coordination with appropriate federal agencies to address national or program-wide resource management issues (e.g., NMSP and DoD).
Permits	• Process permit applications for activities within the site. • Prepare all necessary documentation for each permit processed. • Maintain site staff training and proficiency in permitting process.	• Coordinate review of permit applications for activities within two or more sites within region. • Negotiate with other regional entities that request permits (e.g., NMFS Science Centers). • Facilitate the fulfillment of consultation requirements with appropriate regional, Federal or State entities (e.g., essential fish habitat).	• Develop tools to ensure consistent application of permitting at all sites (e.g., national guidance and database). • Assist site staff in review and processing of class “A” and “B” permits. • Conduct training of site staff. • Monitor achievement of permitting performance targets.
Policy	• Identify local issues through MPR or emerging issues. • Faciliate resolution of site-specific policy issues with local staff and experts (e.g., harbor dredge disposal).	• Identify site specific issues that may apply to other sites in region or to other regions. • Faciliate resolution of regional policy issues with site or regional staff and experts. • Request national assets to help resolve local or regional policy issues (e.g., krill fishing).	• Primarily responsible for the development of national policies. • Facilitate resolution of national policies using site, regional or national staff and experts (e.g., oil spill dispersants).
Management Plan Review	• Coordinate the on-site public MPR process (e.g., public meetings, working groups, SAC involvement, development of action plans and supporting environmental documents).	• Help resolve regional policy issues and ensure consistency between sites. • Determine regional schedule for MPR. • May provide supplemental resources.	• Provide overall guidance on MPR planning process. • Provide resources to regions and sites. • Help resolve national policy issues. • Assist sites on regulatory and NEPA issues. • Facilitate clearance process through NMSP, NOS, NOAA & DOC.

Issue/Activity	Site	Region	National
Sanctuary Advisory Councils	• Each site has an Advisory Council and is solely responsible for its operation.	• No regional SACs. • Faciliate regional linkages between SACs. • Work with managers to present and get SAC input on regional or national issues.	• Provide overall guidance on SAC Policy. • Support and Coordinate annual SAC Chair and Coordinator meetings. • Possible development & oversight of National Advisory Council.
Biogeographic Assessments	• Conduct smaller scale studies that relate directly to site-specific management questions.	• Faciliate the planning and implementation of regional assessments to benefit all sites. • Conduct biogeographic assessments to support new site identification and ecosystem-wide activities.	• Supporting role to help regions plan and implement assessments. • Provide NMSP assets and help coordinate with other NOAA or agency assets.
New Site Identification	• Suggest ideas for new sites. • Share knowledge on site program development and local agency contacts. • Sites are not expected to provide staff.	• Coordinate process to identify new sites in region. • Lead new site assessment and development process. • Supervise regional site assessment and development staff.	• Provide HQ guidance on a consistent regional process to identify and assess new sites. • Facilitate and coordinate resources from NMSP and NOAA. • Process actions for clearance through NOAA.
Congressional Affairs	• Liaison with local district offices of Congressional members representing sites. • Meet with members during DC meeting in March. • Maintain relationships with local and State elected officials.	• Liaison with regional district offices of Congressional members representing sites. • Liaison with members within the region, but outside states with sanctuaries. • Maintain relationships with local and State elected officials outside of existing sites – particularly in areas where new sites are being considered.	• Liaison with members in Washington, DC. • Oversee NMSP Congressional affairs and liaison with NOAA Congressional Affairs.
Media Affairs	• On-site media affairs staff maintain local media contacts, generate press releases, and respond to press inquiries. • National media assets may serve as a site media coordinator when they do not have one of their own.	• National program staff based in region help coordinate regional media and work with site media staff on larger events or to firefight controversial issues.	• Provide media affairs guidance and training to sites. • Oversee national media assets in the regions. • Faciliate the clearace of all press releases through NOAA. • Provide assistance to sites as needed. • Compile daily clips.

Issue/Activity	Site	Region	National
International Activities	• Plan international delegation visits / staff exchanges at a site. • Particiapte in U.S. overseas delegations. • Identify site-specfiic needs and opportunities to work internationally (e.g., Olympic Coast).	• Participate in international efforts to manage marine and coastal resources adjacent to sanctuary regions. • Coordinate international delegation visits to a region. • Liaison between sites and HQ to plan and oversee international visitors. • Participate in U.S. overseas delegations.	• Coordinate all NMSP international activities. • Liaison with NOAA/NOS International Affairs to plan delegation itineraries. • Participate in U.S. overseas delegations.
Maritime Heritage	• Manage site's maritime heritage resources (MHR). • Implement site MHR research and education plans. • Participate in other sites' MHR expeditions when possible. • Contribute to national shipwreck database. • Participate in Maritime Heritage Program (MHP) activities.	• Develop regional partnerships (federal agencies, universities). • Coordinate regional facilities (collections) and resources. • Investigate opportunities for new MHR sites. • Lead certain regional MHR projects (e.g., Pearl Harbor, Midget sub).	• Lead certain national initiatives (e.g., Alligator, Preserve America). • Administer NOAA's ARCH. • Provide support to sites and regions. • Administer MHP mini-grants. • Develop MHP strategic plan. • Administer national shipwreck database project. • Develop national exhibits (e.g., Nauticus). • Develop policy guidance.

Appendix V. The Annual Operating Plan Process