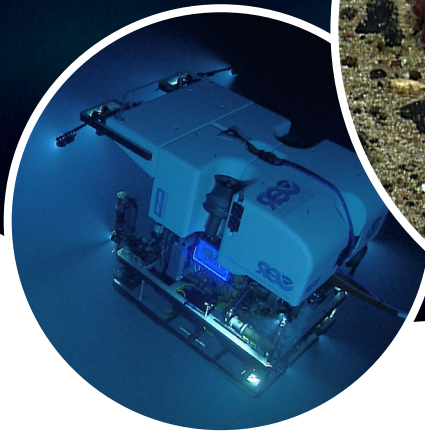


Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument

Final Management Plan and Environmental Assessment



June 2024

Volume 1: Management Plan

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Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument

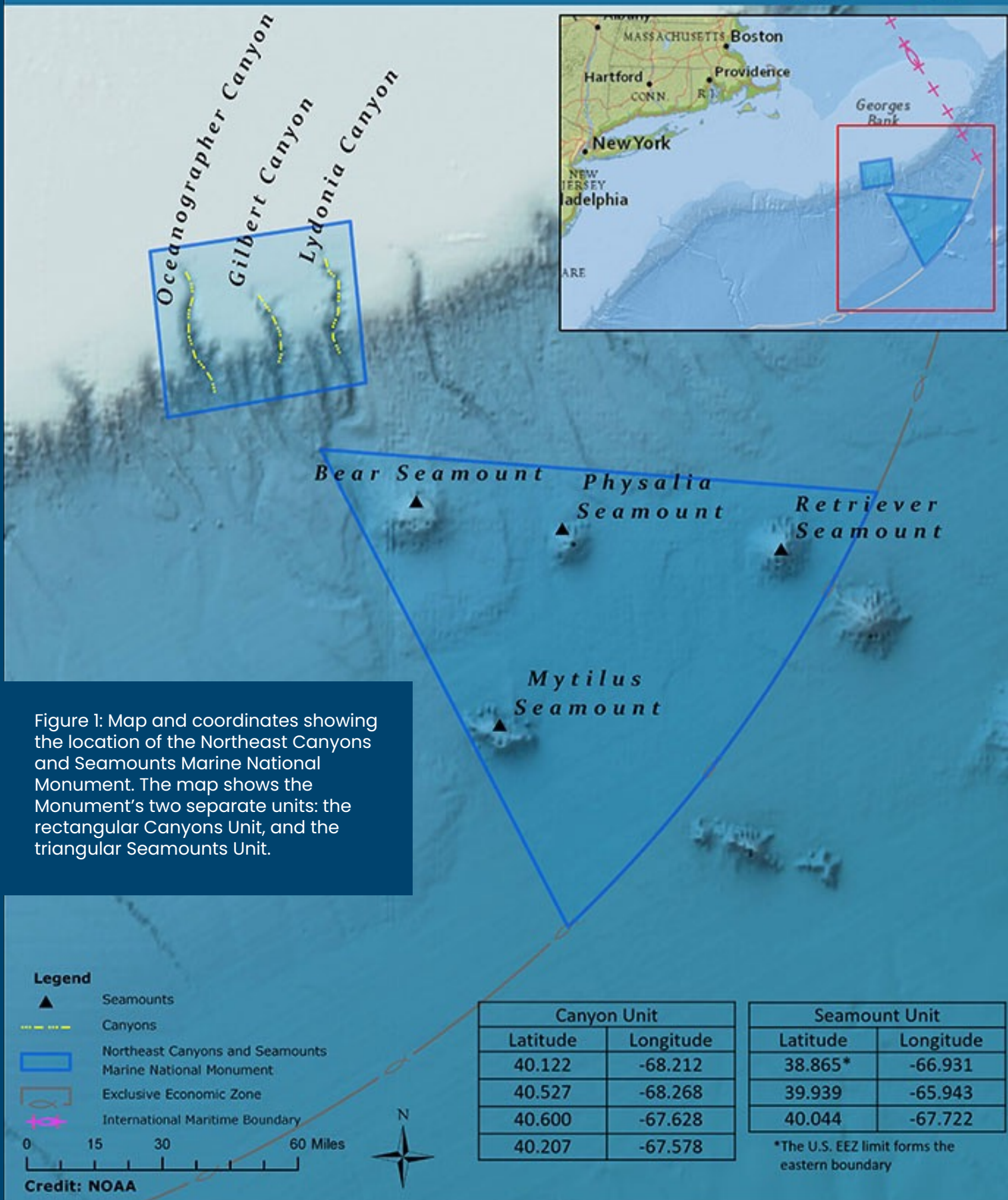


Figure 1: Map and coordinates showing the location of the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument. The map shows the Monument's two separate units: the rectangular Canyons Unit, and the triangular Seamounts Unit.

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All photos in the final management plan are courtesy of NOAA.

Acronyms

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| ALDFG | Abandoned, Lost, or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear |
| FONSI | Finding of No Significant Impact |
| FWS | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| GARFO | Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office |
| ICCAT | International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas |
| NEPA | National Environmental Policy Act |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| NOAA Fisheries | National Marine Fisheries Service |
| PREP | Preparedness for Response Exercise Program |
| U.S. | United States |
| USCG | U.S. Coast Guard |



Highlights

This final management plan was developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument (Monument). The Monument is managed jointly by NOAA and the FWS, which are referred to as the Monument management team. This is the Monument's first management plan.

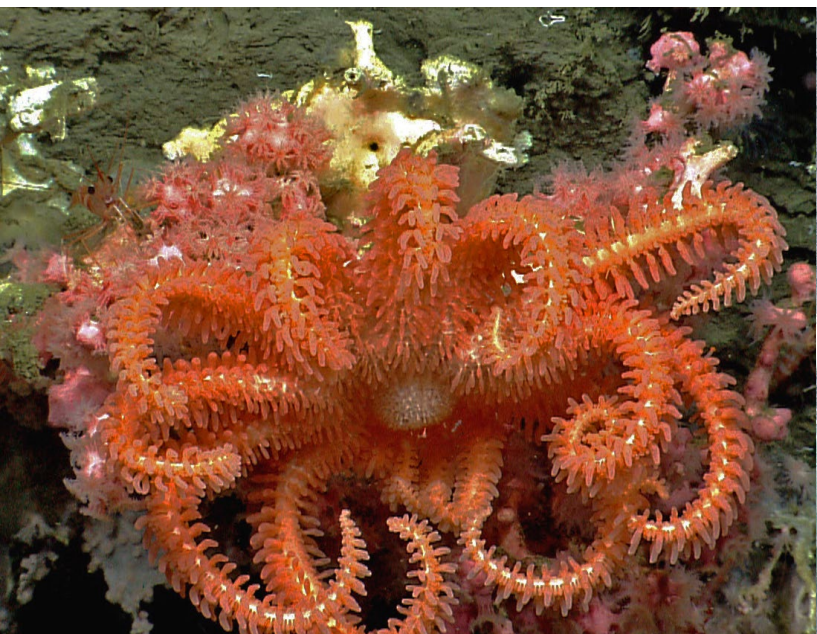
- ◆ Volume 1 is the final management plan. It includes an overview of the permitting system for activities likely to occur in the Monument.
- ◆ Volume 2 is an environmental assessment that evaluates the effects of the final management plan, including three alternatives, on the physical, biological, socioeconomic, cultural, and historical resources that occur in the Monument.
- ◆ Volume 3 includes all the appendices referenced in Volumes 1 and 2.
- ◆ The environmental assessment evaluates three management plan alternatives: a no action alternative in which the proposed management plan would not be adopted, the management team's preferred alternative, which is adopting the management plan as proposed, and a third alternative in which the final management plan (Volume 1) would be adopted with modifications to the permitting system.
- ◆ The final management plan (Volume 1) was developed based upon feedback received during a robust public scoping process (December 2022-January 2023) and public comment period for the draft management plan (September-October 2023). The comments received during public scoping and the public comment period directly informed the development of alternatives and shaped the activities in the final management plan (preferred alternative).
- ◆ The Monument management team considered all comments received on the draft management plan and environmental assessment and made several edits to the Volume 1 final management plan in response to those comments. Appendix F (Volume 3) contains the verbatim comments that were received on the draft management plan and environmental assessment. A written response to comments is included as Appendix G (Volume 3).
- ◆ The FWS and NOAA have issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) for the proposed action of developing and implementing the Volume 1 final management plan, which is included in Appendix H (Volume 3).

Final Management Plan



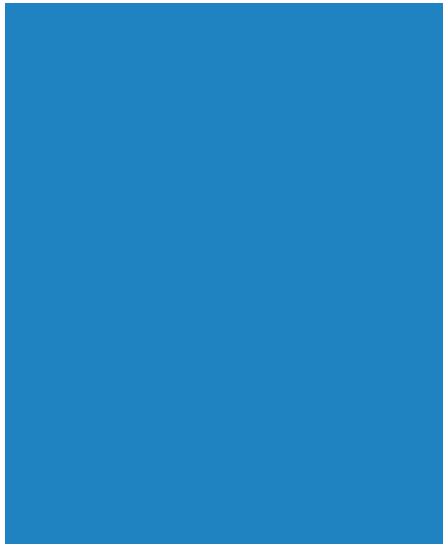
Vision

To preserve the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument in perpetuity, and to inspire a sense of awe, wonder, and stewardship in current and future generations through discovery and exploration of the sea.





Introduction





On September 15, 2016, the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument (Monument) was established by [Presidential Proclamation 9496](#) (Appendix A) under the authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906, making it the first and only marine national monument in the Atlantic Ocean.

[Presidential Proclamation 10049](#), issued on June 5, 2020, modified the Monument, reversing a prohibition on commercial fishing in the Monument. A third proclamation, [Presidential Proclamation 10287](#) (Appendix B), issued on October 8, 2021, reinstated the prohibition on commercial fishing in the Monument and instructed the Secretaries of Commerce and Interior to manage the Monument under the directives of the establishing Presidential Proclamation (9496).

The Monument is 3.1 million acres (4,913 square miles), which is approximately the size of Connecticut. It is located 130 miles southeast of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and is comprised of two units (Fig. 1). The smaller of the two units is the Canyons Unit, which encompasses three undersea canyons: Oceanographer Canyon, Gilbert Canyon and Lydonia Canyon. The larger of the two units is the Seamounts Unit, which encompasses four undersea mountains: Bear Seamount, Physalia Seamount, Retriever Seamount and Mytilus Seamount. The seamounts are part of a long chain of extinct underwater volcanoes called the New England Seamount chain, which is the longest of its kind in the Atlantic Ocean.

Monument Establishing Purpose

Established by Presidential Proclamation 9496 on September 15, 2016, the Monument's purpose is three fold:

- ◆ To protect unique geologic features and vulnerable ecological communities of scientific interest, including corals and other structure-forming fauna that provide food, spawning habitat, and shelter for an array of fish and invertebrate species, and which are extremely sensitive to disturbance from extractive activities;
- ◆ To provide opportunities for research and scientific exploration designed to further understanding of Monument resources and qualities or knowledge of the North Atlantic Ocean ecosystem and resources, and;
- ◆ To provide opportunities for activities that will further the educational value of the Monument and connect people with its unique ecosystems.



Monument Environment

The area encompassed by the Monument has been the subject of scientific exploration and discovery since the 1970s.

The three canyons and four seamounts in the Monument are home to at least 58 species of deep-sea corals, which live at depths of 50 meters (164 feet) to over 4,000 meters (13,123 feet) under the sea surface. The corals, together with other structure-forming fauna, such as sponges and anemones, create a foundation for vibrant deep-sea communities, providing food, spawning habitat, and shelter for an array of fish and invertebrate species.

The shallowest seafloor depths in the Monument are just north of the canyon heads (shallow ends of the canyons) and are around 92 meters (302 feet). The deepest point in the Monument is 4,382 meters (14,377 feet) below sea level (Auster et al., 2020), more than twice the depth of the Grand Canyon.

Bear Seamount is the tallest of the four seamounts and its peak rises approximately 2,499 meters (8,199 feet) from the sea floor. From its peak to the ocean surface is another 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) and its flat summit is 12 miles in diameter. Mytilus Seamount is the shortest of the four seamounts and its peak is 2,389 meters (7,838 feet) or almost 1.5 miles) below sea level (Auster et al. 2020).

Canyons Unit

The Monument's canyons, which are cut into the continental margin, were created by sediment mass movements during and following sea-level lows that largely occurred during the Pleistocene Era. During the Pleistocene Era, the coastline of the eastern U.S. extended much farther seaward than it does today.

There are three canyons that lie within Monument boundaries and cut deep into the continental shelf: Oceanographer, Lydonia and Gilbert, along with several smaller canyons that are confined to just the slope. These include Filebottom and Chebacco canyons. The Canyons Unit consists of a small portion of the continental shelf, the continental slope and the canyons that cut into the continental slope.

These submarine canyons are susceptible to active erosion, landslides and powerful ocean currents that transport sediments and organic carbon from the shelf down the canyons to the deep ocean floor. Hard bottom areas and the slope areas in between the canyons provide habitats for sessile (fixed in one place) filter feeders, sponges, attached anemones, and deep-sea corals. Soft bottoms throughout these areas host other sessile species such as sea pens, burrowing anemones, brittle stars and species that live in seafloor sediments, such as polychaete worms.

The shallowest spot in the Monument is 302 feet deep, which is the same height as a 25-story building.

Well-known mobile species that live close to the seafloor in the canyons include, but are not limited to, squid, octopus, skate (generally around soft bottoms), flounder (especially in soft bottoms), Acadian redfish, hake, lobster and crab. Many lesser known deepwater fish species also occur in the deeper portions of the Canyons Unit. Major oceanographic features, such as currents, temperature gradients, eddies and fronts, interact with the steep fronts of the canyons and influence the distribution patterns of highly migratory oceanic species such as tuna, billfish and sharks. They provide feeding grounds for these and many other marine species.

Toothed whales, such as the endangered sperm whale, and many species of beaked whales are strongly attracted to the environments created by these submarine canyons. Surveys of the area show significantly higher numbers of beaked whales present in canyon regions than in non-canyon shelf-edge regions. Endangered sperm whales, iconic in the region due to their historic importance to New England's whaling communities, preferentially reside in the U.S. Atlantic continental margin and have been observed in the Monument. Three additional species of endangered whales (fin, sei and blue whales) have also been observed in the Monument.

Seamounts Unit

The New England Seamount chain was formed as the Earth's crust passed over a stationary hot spot that pushed magma up through the seafloor. The chain is now composed of more than 30 extinct undersea volcanoes, running like a curved spine from the southern side of Georges Bank to midway across the western Atlantic Ocean. Many of the seamounts in the chain have characteristic flat tops that were created by erosion from ocean waves and subsidence as magma cooled.

Four of these seamounts are in the Monument: Bear, Physalia, Retriever and Mytilus. They are the only four of the New England Seamounts located within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone¹. All four of these seamounts have steep and complex topography that interrupts existing currents, providing a constant supply of plankton and nutrients to the animals that inhabit them, as well as causing upwelling of nutrient-rich waters toward the ocean surface. The seamounts also provide shelter from predators and serve as spawning and nursery areas for a multitude of species.

Being geographically isolated from the continental shelf, these seamounts support ecological communities that are hotspots of biodiversity in the deep ocean. Organisms include deep-sea corals that are hundreds or thousands of years old and a wide array of other benthic marine organisms not found on the surrounding deep-sea floor. The New England Seamounts are home to many rare and endemic species, several of which are new to science and are not known to occur anywhere else on Earth.

¹The exclusive economic zone is defined under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as an area of the ocean extending up to 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) immediately offshore from a country's land and coast in which that country retains exclusive rights to the exploration and exploitation of natural resources.

At 14,377 feet, the deepest spot in the Monument is twice as deep as the Grand Canyon.

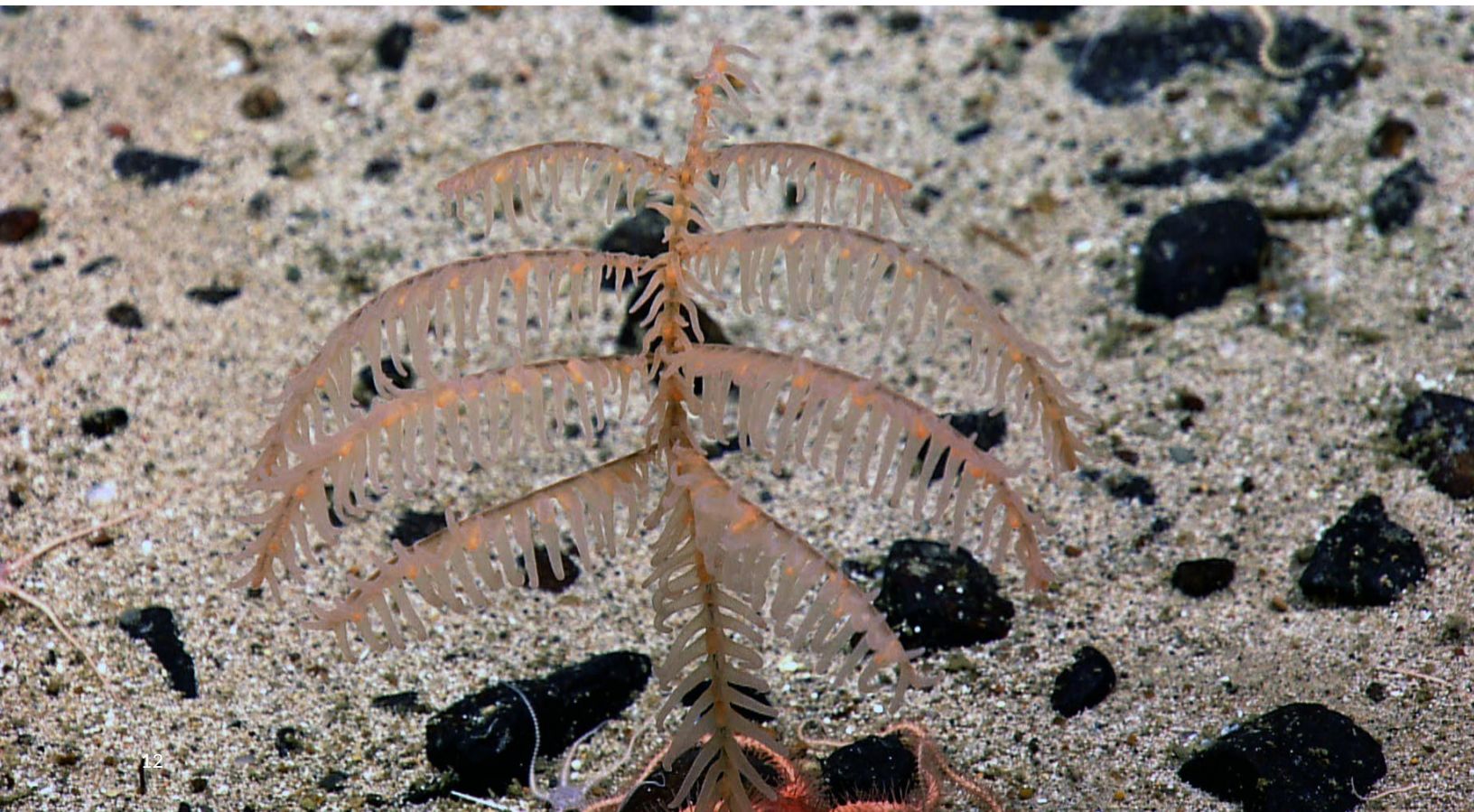
Bear Seamount is 1,912 feet taller than Mount Washington in New Hampshire, which is the tallest mountain in New England.

Ecosystem Processes

Together the Monument's canyons and seamounts create dynamic currents and eddies that enhance biological productivity and provide feeding grounds for seabirds and pelagic (open ocean) megafauna like whales, dolphins and turtles, as well as highly migratory fish, such as tunas, billfish and sharks. More than 10 species of shark, including white sharks, use the feeding grounds of the Monument.

Marine birds concentrate in upwelling areas near the canyons and seamounts. Several species of gulls, shearwaters, petrels, storm-petrels, alcids, gannets, skuas and terns, among others, are regularly observed in the region, sometimes in large aggregations. Recent analysis of geolocation data found that Maine's State Threatened Atlantic puffin frequents the Monument between September and March, indicating a previously unknown wintering habitat for this bird (Baran et al., 2022). The federally endangered Bermuda petrel (cahow) has been found to enter the Monument on long distance trips from its nesting grounds in Bermuda (Raine et al., 2022). Recent tracking studies have shown that the endangered black-capped petrel, which nests only on the island of Hispaniola in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, also migrates to and forages in the Monument (Satgé et al., 2022).

These canyons and seamounts have long been an area of intense scientific interest. Scientists from government and academic institutions have studied the canyons and seamounts using research vessels, submarines, and remotely operated underwater vehicles that have yielded many new discoveries. Yet much remains to be discovered about these unique, isolated environments and their geological, ecological, and biological resources.



Cultural and Historical Connections

More than 12,000 years ago, much of the continental shelf was exposed, dry land, including portions of the Canyons Unit. This land was home to many cultures and provided habitat for many prehistoric creatures during the last Ice Age, also known as the Pleistocene era. Mammoths and other large mammals roamed the canyon heads, which were also home to Paleo-Indian cultures. Lower sea levels allowed torrents of melting glacier water to carve the canyons into river valleys.

As sea levels rose, new and different cultural connections grew between people and the area that is now the Monument. Those waters became well-traversed by vessels from across the world. This led to a rich maritime heritage that encompassed a diversity of cultures. Historically the Monument's waters have supported trades such as fishing, whaling, and shipping.

Of archaeological interest in the Monument are shipping lanes used for trade during the 17th and 18th centuries. The Monument was also an area of conflict during World Wars I and II, when allied shipping and military vessels were attacked by German U-boats. This area was a route for transatlantic immigration from the 18th through 20th centuries, with a peak from the 1830s to the 1920s. An unknown number of vessels were lost during this period, some without a trace, and it is possible some could lie in the Monument. There is much to learn about the diverse historical and cultural connections between people – past and present – and the Monument.



Management Plan Goals

Three key themes came up repeatedly during public scoping for the Monument's management plan: stewardship, research, and education. These themes became the basis for the three program areas in the management plan: Management & Stewardship, Research & Exploration, and Engagement & Education.

Within these three program areas, the Monument management plan identifies four goals for the next 15 years. Each of the four goals is connected to one of the three program areas. These four goals were developed based upon feedback from the public scoping process and consultations with subject matter experts. The goals are not presented in any priority order.

Program Area: Management and Stewardship

Goal 1: Conserve and protect the marine ecosystem within the Monument.

Goal 2: Establish staffing capacity to support essential management functions and develop partnerships to achieve effective joint management and community stewardship.

Program Area: Research and Exploration

Goal 3: Conduct innovative, collaborative, and interdisciplinary research and exploration to improve understanding of biological, physical, cultural, and historical resources in the Monument.

Program Area: Engagement and Education

Goal 4: Increase the public's awareness of and sense of connection to the monument and the deep sea.

As the first management plan for the Monument, the goals, objectives, and activities described in this plan focus on establishing the building blocks and foundation for long-term, effective, collaborative management and community stewardship.

Organized around three program areas (Management & Stewardship, Research & Exploration, Engagement & Education), the management plan also describes the proposed permitting system for activities in the Monument.

The Monument's management plan is being developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.). Volume 2 of this document is the final environmental assessment that evaluates the effects of the management plan on the biological, physical, socioeconomic, cultural and historical environment.

In addition to complying with NEPA, the management plan complies with numerous other laws, policies, and regulations. A description of how the management plan complies with all relevant laws, policies and regulations can be found in the Volume 2 final environmental assessment.

Joint Management Team

Presidential Proclamation 9496 delegated management of the Monument to the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of Commerce. The FWS, represented by the Northeast Region's National Wildlife Refuge System Program, manages the Monument for the Department of the Interior. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), on behalf of NOAA, manages the Monument for the Department of Commerce. The FWS and NOAA Fisheries jointly manage the Monument under their individual authorities and a joint Statement of Intent (Appendix C). The two agencies manage the Monument in cooperation with the Department of State, U.S. Navy (Navy), and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).

Joint management of the Monument allows NOAA and the FWS to combine their respective resources and management authorities, along with the complementary skills and expertise of their staffs, for the benefit of the Monument. Working together, the two agencies can provide more effective stewardship and management than either could alone.

Joint management can also present challenges when it comes to resolving differences in agency perspectives and approaches and resolving uncertainty around overlapping legal authorities. In developing their joint management practice, the FWS and NOAA Monument staff (Monument management team) are committed to:

- Extending trust and building camaraderie
- Recognizing and utilizing each other's strengths
- Resolving conflicts at the lowest possible organizational level

The aim is to create a cohesive management team that operates effectively, nimbly, and with passion for the work. Currently, the Monument management team is composed of one representative from the FWS and one representative from NOAA: the FWS Monument superintendent and the NOAA Monument lead.

The Monument management team meets on a regular basis, most often weekly. Additional NOAA and FWS staff, including planners, advisors, marine resource staff, cultural and historical resource staff, visitor services and outreach staff and agency leadership participate in the management team on an as-needed basis. Similarly, the Department of State, Navy and USCG have designated representatives to work on Monument-related issues. Those agency experts join the management team to address specific topics and issues on an as-needed basis. These agencies all have the option to formally join the management team at any point in time.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Monument is a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the FWS manages the Monument through its authorities under National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act and National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 668dd- 668ee, as amended), the Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 460k et seq.), the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1531 et seq.), Public Law 98-532, and Executive Order 6166 of June 10, 1933.

The FWS, which is part of the Department of the Interior, is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing the Nation's fish and wildlife populations and their habitats. The mission of the FWS is "working with others, to conserve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people." National natural resources entrusted to the FWS for conservation and protection include migratory birds, endangered and threatened species, inter-jurisdictional fish, wetlands, and certain marine mammals. The agency seeks to provide and enhance opportunities to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation, and foster understanding and instill appreciation of the diversity and interconnectedness of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats.

The Monument is part of the FWS's Northeast Region Wildlife Refuges Program. The FWS's Northeast Region New England Ecological Services Field Office, Migratory Birds Program, Office of Law Enforcement, and Fish and Aquatic Conservation Program provide conservation oversight for protected species in the Monument under the Endangered Species Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO), based in Gloucester, Massachusetts, is part of NOAA Fisheries, and is NOAA's lead line office for preparing and implementing this management plan with support from NOAA's Southeast Regional Office, NOAA's Highly Migratory Species Management Division, NOAA's Marine Monument Program in the Pacific, other NOAA line offices, and NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Fisheries Science Center.

GARFO works closely with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center through an integrated program to promote science-based management of the Monument's resources. Other NOAA line offices that support Monument management include the Office of Law Enforcement; National Ocean Service; National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Services; National Weather Service, Program, Planning, and Integration; and the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research.

In addition to shared responsibility for administration of the Endangered Species Act, NOAA Fisheries administers the Marine Mammal Protection Act and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. NOAA Fisheries supports both domestic and international marine resource management within the Atlantic and is responsible for assisting fishery management councils in the development of fishery management plans and amendments, drafting and implementing federal fishery regulations, issuing federal fishing permits and monitoring fisheries stocks. In accordance with the Atlantic

Tunas Convention Act of 1975, NOAA is also responsible for administering and enforcing all provisions of the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, to which the U.S. is a party. Other major NOAA responsibilities include exploration and research, ocean literacy, recovering protected species, maintaining resilient marine habitats and monitoring compliance with fishery agreements and treaties.

Federal, Tribal Nation, State and International Partners

Department of State

The U.S. Department of State formulates and implements U.S. policy on a wide variety of international issues that concern the ocean. The Office of Oceans and Polar Affairs, within the Department of State's Bureau for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, is responsible for formulating and implementing U.S. policy on international issues concerning the law of the sea, oceans, the Arctic and Antarctica. In coordination with the FWS and NOAA, the Office of Oceans and Polar Affairs promotes marine scientific research with an efficient authorization process and through support of several international scientific organizations.

Its ocean policy responsibilities at the international level include: protection of the marine environment from pollution and other anthropogenic threats through the International Maritime Organization, Regional Seas Programme, oil spill response, control of invasive species, and other means; conservation of marine biodiversity, including whales and other marine mammals, seabirds, and coral reefs; improvement of maritime security in order to protect the U.S. from terrorism and other criminal threats, and to protect freedom of navigation and maritime commerce; ensuring the consistency of coastal state maritime claims and regulations with international law; and protection of underwater cultural heritage, through participation in bilateral and multilateral international agreements, as well as through domestic policies.

U.S. Coast Guard

The USCG First District represents the USCG on Monument management issues. The management plan identifies strategies to build a strong partnership with the USCG, which is a leader in spill response, first responder and emergency response efforts, marine transportation management and analysis and law enforcement in the marine environment.

The USCG is charged with a wide variety of missions in the maritime environment, including safeguarding the American people and promoting national security, border security and economic prosperity. The USCG saves those in peril and protects the Nation from all maritime threats.

As a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, a law enforcement organization, a regulatory agency, a member of the U.S. Intelligence Community and a first responder, the USCG employs a unique mix of authorities, broad jurisdiction, flexible operational capabilities and a network of partnerships. The USCG is the principal Federal agency responsible

for maritime safety, security and environmental stewardship in U.S. ports and inland waterways, along more than 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline, throughout the 4.5 million square miles of U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone, and on the high seas.

U.S. Navy

The Monument management team is coordinating with the Navy. The Navy is the maritime service branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, and its mission is to organize, train and equip naval forces for the peacetime promotion of the national security interests and prosperity of the United States and for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea. The Navy does not have any active ranges or operations areas which overlap with the Monument. While the Navy's Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing area does encompass the Monument, there has not been any recent training or testing within the Monument boundary. Naval forces are expected to transit through the Monument and could need to carry out other training and testing activities in the future, so continued coordination and communication with the Monument management team are important.

Tribal Nations

In managing the Monument, the management team strives to fulfill its trust responsibility to federally recognized Tribal Nations through early and frequent government-to-government consultation and coordination.

The Monument management team invited 11 federally recognized and three state recognized Tribal Nations in the Northeast to participate in the development of the management plan at the start of the planning process. While no federal or state recognized Tribal Nations formally responded to the invitations, the Shinnecock Nation provided comments at one of the public comment meetings for the draft management plan. Additional informal conversations with Tribal Nation and Indigenous community members in 2023 indicated that there are strong cultural connections between Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples and the Monument, and that they have an interest in involvement and collaboration.

The Monument management team will continue to reach out and look for opportunities to support the engagement of federally recognized Tribal Nations on implementation of the Monument's management plan. The Monument management team will also explore opportunities for other Indigenous communities to participate in Monument management and programs.

Federally recognized Tribal Nations

- Mi'kmaq Nation, formerly Aroostook Band of Micmacs
- Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
- Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
- Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
- Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut
- Narragansett Indian Tribe
- Passamaquoddy Tribe - Indian Township

- Passamaquoddy Tribe - Pleasant Point
- Penobscot Nation
- Shinnecock Indian Nation
- Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)

State recognized Tribal Nations

- Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation
- Nipmuc Nation
- Schaghticoke Tribal Nation

The management plan identifies goals, objectives and activities focused on improving coordination and creating pathways for co-stewardship with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities over the next 15 years. These activities focus on understanding if and how Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples want to be involved in Monument management; gauging their interest in exploring and sharing their cultural connections to the Monument; offering opportunities to visit and experience the Monument; and identifying what resources and support they would need to meaningfully participate in stewardship, research, education, and engagement programs, should they be interested.

Other Federal Agencies

The Monument management team anticipates frequent coordination and collaboration with a multitude of Federal agencies on Monument management issues as well as individual research, exploration, engagement and education projects. In addition to the Federal agency partners already mentioned, additional agencies include, but are not limited to, the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

States

While located in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone outside of state waters and jurisdiction, coordination with states in the Monument's region, which include Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York, is important. Many recreational users of the Monument are leaving from and transiting through state waters to access the Monument. Recreational anglers land their catches in multiple states. State governments in the Northeast have great expertise and play primary roles in many marine management issues including but not limited to navigation, marine fisheries management, underwater archeology, endangered species management, spill response and planning, law enforcement and climate change planning, monitoring, and response.

The Monument management team recognizes that states in the Northeast are currently dealing with significant marine and ocean management workloads within state waters. Thus, the Monument management team has included activities in the management plan that allow for coordination with these states through existing forums in which the states already regularly participate, including but not limited to the Northeast Regional Ocean Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. The Monument management team also anticipates consulting and coordinating with state marine resource managers and other experts on individual Monument management issues, programs, and projects.

Other Countries

The Monument management team anticipates coordinating with other countries and international governmental organizations on specific migratory species management issues (including but not limited to management of black-capped petrel, Bermuda petrel and Atlantic salmon), research projects and broader marine protected area management and planning issues as they arise.

The Monument management team will build on existing international partnerships including but not limited to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization, and the partnership between the FWS, NOAA Fisheries and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Through NOAA there will continue to be engagement in the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), which oversees the conservation and management of a variety of Atlantic marine species, including tunas, swordfish, marlin and sharks, and adopts measures to minimize bycatch of turtles and seabirds associated with these fisheries. This responsibility is shared among ICCAT's 52 members, including the United States.

Public Involvement in Management

Public involvement in development of the management plan, through public scoping and through the public comment period on the draft management plan and environmental assessment, greatly contributed to shaping the structure and content of the plan. As the Monument management team moves forward implementing the management plan, public and stakeholder involvement in management of the Monument will be key to achieving the vision and goals of the management plan, which are founded on the principles of community stewardship.

At the heart of the community stewardship approach is the desire to partner with and encourage community members to adopt and sustain ocean-friendly behaviors (Marshall et al., 2015), recognizing that the long-term health of people and nature are dependent on each other. Community stewardship does not take the place of agency decision-making, policies, rules or regulations, but complements them by acknowledging and addressing their limitations.

Community stewardship depends on active public participation, established mechanisms for adaptive management and the development of strong partnerships with those who actively use and care about the Monument. The final management plan proposes to involve the public and stakeholders in management through at least two public community forums each year, with the goal of at least one forum being virtual and at least one forum being in-person. The locations of the in-person community forums will rotate throughout the region.

Additionally, the management plan identifies numerous activities that will meaningfully engage stakeholders in specific management, stewardship, education and research activities, with the goal of improving conservation outcomes and fostering a sense of deep connection to and collective responsibility for the long-term health of the Monument.

Prohibited, Regulated, and Other Activities

Presidential Proclamation 9496, which established the Monument, identified a suite of prohibited and regulated activities in the Monument, as well as several activities that fall outside the prohibited or regulated categories.

Prohibited Activities

The following activities are **prohibited** in the Monument under Presidential Proclamation 9496:

1. Exploring for, developing, or producing oil and gas or minerals, or undertaking any other energy exploration or development activities within the monument.
2. Using or attempting to use poisons, electrical charges, or explosives in the collection or harvest of a monument resource.
3. Introducing or otherwise releasing an introduced species from within or into the monument.
4. Removing, moving, taking, harvesting, possessing, injuring, disturbing, or damaging, or attempting to remove, move, take, harvest, possess, injure, disturb, or damage, any living or nonliving monument resource, except as provided under regulated activities.
5. Drilling into, anchoring, dredging, or otherwise altering the submerged lands; or constructing, placing, or abandoning any structure, material, or other matter on the submerged lands, except for scientific instruments and constructing or maintaining submarine cables.
6. Fishing commercially or possessing commercial fishing gear except when stowed and not available for immediate use during passage without interruption through the monument (with the exception of the red crab fishery and the American lobster fishery, which is allowed through September 15, 2023).

Regulated Activities

According to Presidential Proclamation 9496, the following activities may take place in the Monument in accordance with existing policies, laws, and regulations. In some cases, these activities may require permits and/or are subject to restrictions (see permitting system overview).

1. Research and scientific exploration designed to further understanding of monument resources and qualities or knowledge of the North Atlantic Ocean ecosystem and resources.
2. Activities that will further the educational value of the monument or will assist in the conservation and management of the monument.
3. Anchoring scientific instruments.
4. Recreational fishing in accordance with applicable fishery management plans and other applicable laws and other requirements.

5. Commercial fishing for red crab and American lobster until September 15, 2023 (after which it is a prohibited activity).
6. Other activities that do not impact monument resources, such as sailing or bird and marine mammal watching so long as those activities are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Nothing in this proclamation is intended to require that the Secretaries issue individual permits in order to allow such activities.
7. Construction and maintenance of submarine cables

Emergencies, Law Enforcement Activities, and Military Uses

The prohibitions required in the Monument shall not apply to activities and exercises of the U.S. Armed Forces, including those carried out by the USCG. The U.S. Armed Forces shall ensure, by the adoption of appropriate measures not impairing operations or operation capabilities, that its vessels and aircraft act in a manner consistent, so far as is practicable, with the Monument's establishing Presidential Proclamation 9496.

The Navy does not have any active ranges or operations areas that overlap with the monument. While the Navy's Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing area does encompass the Monument, there has not been any recent training or testing within the Monument boundary. The Navy anticipates its primary activity in the Monument will be transiting but may need to conduct a limited number of military readiness activities if required for national security purposes, consistent with the Atlantic Fleet Training and Testing Environmental Impact Statement/Overseas Environmental Impact Statement (<https://www.nepa.navy.mil/aftteis>). The Navy may also conduct research activities in a manner consistent so far as is practicable with the Monument's establishing Presidential Proclamation 9496. It is anticipated that the primary U.S. Air Force activity in the Monument will be overflights.

In the event of threatened or actual destruction of, loss of, or injury to a Monument resource or quality resulting from an incident, including but not limited to spills, caused by a component of the Department of Defense or the USCG, the cognizant component shall promptly coordinate with the FWS and NOAA for the purpose of taking appropriate action to respond to and mitigate any harm and, if possible, restore or replace the Monument resource or quality.

Nothing in the proclamation establishing the Monument or any regulation implementing it shall limit or otherwise affect the U.S. Armed Forces' discretion to use, maintain, improve, manage, or control any property under the administrative control of a Military Department or otherwise limit the availability of such property for military mission purposes, including but not limited to defensive areas and airspace reservations.

International Navigation and Overflight

The Monument shall be managed in accordance with international law, and NOAA and the FWS shall coordinate with the Department of State to that end. The management plan and any implementing regulations shall not unlawfully restrict navigation and overflight freedoms and other internationally lawful uses of the sea related to these freedoms in the Monument. No restrictions shall apply to or be enforced against a person who is not a citizen, national, or resident alien of the U.S. (including foreign flag vessels) unless in accordance with international law. Also, in accordance with international law, no restrictions shall apply to foreign warships, naval auxiliaries, and other vessels owned or operated by a state and used, for the time being, only on government non-commercial service, in order to fully respect the sovereign immunity of such vessels under international law.

Activities Outside Scope

Law Enforcement and Military Activities

Evaluating law enforcement activities and U.S. Armed Forces activities in the Monument is outside the scope of this management plan and environmental assessment. The U.S. Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies on regular intervals conduct consultations with the FWS and NOAA under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the essential fish habitat provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to consider the effects of their activities on protected species and habitats in the waters that the Monument now encompasses.

In the event that law enforcement and/or military actions in the Monument cause destruction of, loss of or injury to Monument resources, the Monument management team will work with the USCG and/or Navy on efforts to mitigate injuries and, if possible, restore or replace the injured Monument resources. These injuries and response efforts would be evaluated in supplemental analyses in accordance with NEPA.

Shipping Vessel Traffic

Regarding shipping vessel traffic in the Monument, Presidential Proclamation 9496 provides that the Monument shall not unlawfully restrict navigation, overflight, and other internationally lawful uses of the sea in the Monument. This management plan does not consider any regulation of shipping vessel movement in the Monument; and the environmental assessment does not evaluate the effects of shipping vessel traffic on marine resources.

The Monument management team recognizes that shipping vessels can adversely affect marine mammals and pelagic seabirds due to collisions with ships and changes in behavior as a result of acoustic disturbance and lighting. However, at this time, the management team does not have enough information to assess the extent to which shipping vessel traffic may be causing impacts to Monument resources. Thus, the

management plan identifies information-gathering activities related to shipping vessel traffic, in partnership with the USCG, and could in the future explore and evaluate voluntary partnerships and other lawful avenues through which to address adverse impacts, should they be found.

Submarine Cable Installation and Maintenance

There are 15 known submarine cables (Fig. 18 in Volume 2 final environmental assessment) that traverse the seafloor of the Seamounts Unit of the Monument. There are no submarine cables known to be in the Canyons Unit. While listed as a regulated activity in the establishing proclamation, regulation of and analyzing the effects of submarine cable installation and maintenance are outside the scope of the final management plan and environmental assessment. This topic will be addressed in a separate document (potentially a step-down plan and/or compatibility determination, as appropriate), a draft of which will be published for public comment.

The Monument management team is engaged in ongoing discussions with the Department of State regarding the installation and maintenance of submarine cables in the Monument to ensure that the FWS's and NOAA's obligations under Presidential Proclamation 9496 and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 are met, consistent with international law. The Monument management team will also engage with the submarine cable industry on this issue to better understand the nature of submarine cable installation and maintenance work in the Monument and the best management practices used by industry to avoid impacts to sensitive marine resources.

The Monument is managed in accordance with international law.

Enforcement Partnerships

The Monument management team will rely heavily on partnerships with the USCG First District and NOAA Office of Law Enforcement to ensure compliance with and enforcement of Monument rules and regulations. The FWS Refuge Law Enforcement office and the FWS Office of Law Enforcement will provide investigative and case support, but do not currently have law enforcement personnel operating in the offshore marine environment in the North Atlantic.

In the first few years of management plan implementation, the Monument management team will focus on developing and deepening its relationship with the USCG First District, the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, the FWS Refuge Law Enforcement office and the FWS Office of Law Enforcement to identify additional resource needs related to law enforcement in the Monument.

Anticipated Rulemaking and Compatibility Determinations

NOAA Fisheries recently has defined the boundary coordinates of the Monument area and reflected the prohibition on commercial fishing in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act regulations. A [final rule](#) was published in the Federal Register on February 16, 2024 and went into effect on March 18, 2024.

The FWS manages the Monument as a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and will develop compatibility determinations for allowed uses and undertake rulemaking for the Monument as deemed necessary in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, Refuge Recreation Act and final management plan and environmental assessment.

Budgeting and Prioritization

The Monument management team will work together on an annual basis to budget for Monument activities following these principles:

- focus on activities that achieve multiple objectives;
- invite innovation; and
- support collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts.

Activities in the management plan that are marked with an asterisk (*) are those activities that can reasonably be expected to occur given current budget and staffing levels.

Should funding decline, asterisked activities may also have to be scaled back. All non-asterisked activities are expected to need additional staff or resources to be implemented beyond the preliminary planning stage.

NOAA and FWS budgets fluctuate on a yearly basis and the agencies frequently do not receive their budgets until midway through the fiscal year. It is anticipated over the life of this management plan that there will be some years that allow for expansion of Monument programs and some years that require scaling back. Promoting and developing a wide array of partnerships will be crucial to achieving the work outlined in the management plan. In determining how to allocate funding on a yearly basis, the Monument will prioritize funding as follows:

1. Staff: Maintain basic staffing levels to implement essential functions and programs.

The first funding priority is to ensure that basic staffing needs are met. Staff are needed to perform essential functions that include but are not limited to coordinating with partners; promulgating regulations; reviewing and issuing permits and ensuring compliance with those permits; fulfilling the Tribal trust responsibility; addressing impacts to Monument resources; hosting community forums and giving the public an opportunity to provide input on Monument management; meeting internal reporting and administrative requirements; producing outreach materials; and coordinating research and education projects in the Monument.

2. Fund: Fund on-the-ground research, education, and outreach projects.

Once basic staffing needs are met, the second highest priority for any given budget year will be to work with partners to fund, support and implement on-the-ground scientific research, exploration, education and engagement programs.

3. Lead: Take a leading role in North Atlantic Ocean stewardship, education, and research.

Should budgets allow for the previous two priorities to be met, the third budgeting priority is to deepen and expand the Monument's leadership role in ocean conservation in the North Atlantic. Internal capacity would be expanded to allow staff the opportunity to implement the non-asterisked activities in the management plan that go beyond essential functions; to spearhead initiatives, to deepen partnerships and to serve in leadership roles in regional ocean management and stewardship organizations.

The Monument currently is supported by one permanent, full-time FWS employee and one half-time permanent NOAA Fisheries employee.

In fiscal year 2023, the FWS received \$1,000,000 of congressionally appropriated funding for the Monument, \$700,000 of which was directed toward Monument on-the-ground research and education projects.

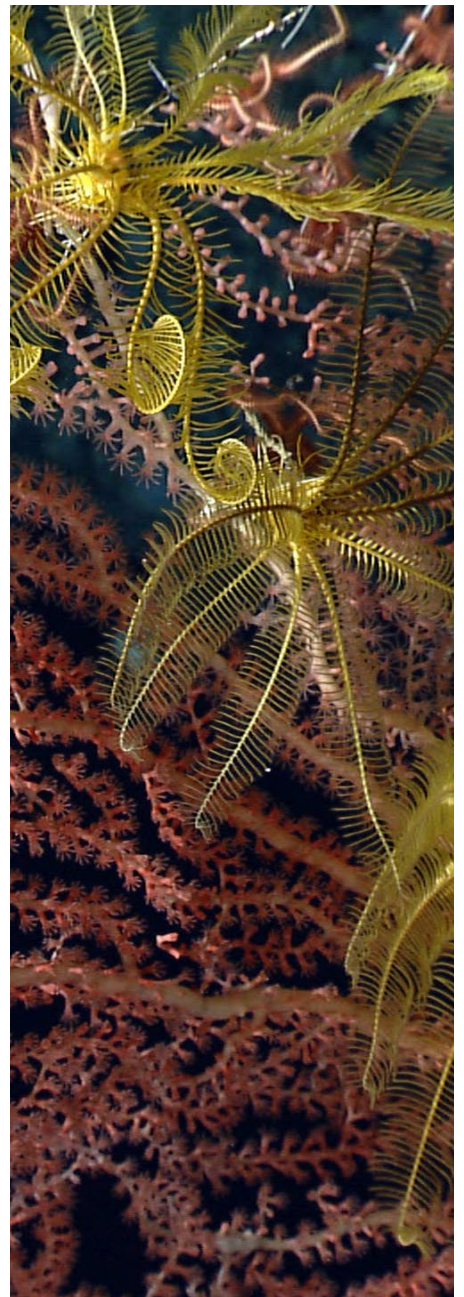
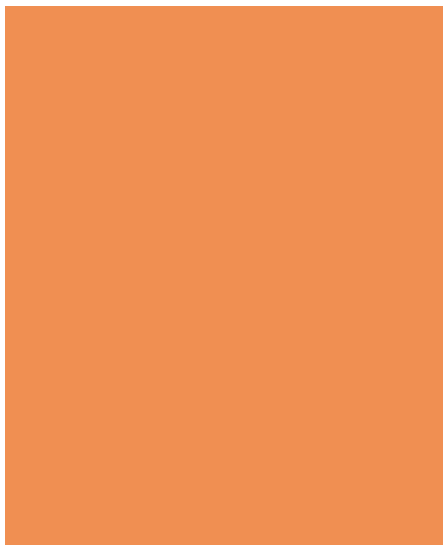
Future funding for the Monument is uncertain and updates on funding will be provided to the public through the Monument's annual report.

This management plan does not constitute a commitment of funds, or a commitment to request funds, by Federal agencies. All funding for current and possible future Monument activities is subject to the budgeting and appropriations processes of the Federal Government.





Monument Programs





Management & Stewardship Program

Establishing an effective management and stewardship program for the Monument is essential to protecting its marine ecosystems, cultural and historical resources and the benefits these resources provide to this and future generations. The management and stewardship program will focus on establishing and deepening partnerships, improving understanding of uses in the Monument to inform management decisions and promoting community stewardship.

The timeline for meeting each objective is 15 years (the life of the management plan) unless otherwise noted. Coordination and/or collaboration between NOAA Fisheries and the FWS is presumed for all activities. The depth and breadth to which each objective can be achieved will depend on funding availability.

Activities marked with an asterisk (*) are those activities that can reasonably be expected to occur within the next 1 to 15 years given current (fiscal year 2023) budget and staff support levels.

In most cases asterisked activities are associated with target timelines (for example, within two years, within five years). The start date for those timelines is the publication of the final management plan. All other activities are expected to need additional staff or resources to be implemented in a meaningful way (beyond preliminary planning). As staff and funding to support these activities become available, timeline goals will be determined and established.

Goal 1

Conserve and protect the marine ecosystem within the Monument.

Objective 1.1: Develop a regulatory framework for uses and activities in the Monument that is consistent with establishing Presidential Proclamation 9496, and operate an effective permitting program.

- NOAA Fisheries will promulgate regulations using its authorities under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to codify the prohibition on commercial fishing in the Monument as established in Presidential Proclamation 9496. *
- The FWS will publish for public review and comment draft compatibility determinations deemed necessary for uses in the Monument. *
- Within three years, the FWS will assess whether any regulations in addition to the general regulations governing the National Wildlife Refuge System at 50 C.F.R. §§ 25-38 are necessary. *
- Within five years, establish a process through which the FWS and NOAA Fisheries will collaborate and share information on issuing permits for activities and uses within the Monument. *
- The FWS and NOAA Fisheries will process and evaluate permit applications received in a timely manner. *
- On an annual basis, NOAA Fisheries and the FWS will analyze and report to each other on information gathered from the permits each agency issued. *
- Publish a user-friendly, online permitting guide for the Monument. *
- Improve awareness about the Monument's location and management measures by ensuring that its boundary is represented on nautical charts, maps, and ocean-related apps such as WhaleAlert. *

Objective 1.2: Develop an effective Monument enforcement program that encourages community stewardship.

- Twice a year for first three years of management plan implementation, host meetings with NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement, the FWS's Office of Law Enforcement and Refuge Law Enforcement Office, and the USCG to discuss and prioritize law enforcement concerns; share information; and evaluate law enforcement resource and staffing needs for the Monument. Host additional meetings as needed. *

- Explore opportunities to use satellite data and other technologies to virtually track use of the Monument, ensure compliance with prohibitions, and assess whether there are issues with unauthorized, unregulated, and illegal fishing in the Monument.

Objective 1.3: Assess potential impacts of marine debris and abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) on Monument resources.

- Develop a voluntary tracking/reporting system that allows researchers, recreational fishermen, wildlife watchers, and boaters to report observations of ALDFG and other types of marine debris, and/or interactions of such gear and debris with Monument resources.
- Should significant marine debris or ALDFG issues be found, evaluate their impacts and explore management options for mitigating, replacing or restoring injured Monument resources.

Objective 1.4: Complete an assessment of all major uses of the Monument.

Vessel Traffic

- Within five years, partner with the USCG Navigation Center and USCG navigation specialists to better understand shipping activity in the Monument. *
- Within 15 years, partner with the USCG to conduct outreach to the shipping industry to increase awareness about the Monument; how to avoid and reduce the likelihood of vessel strikes of marine mammals and seabirds; how to respond when a vessel strike occurs; and how to reduce the impact of light and sound on seabirds, marine mammals, and other marine species.

Submarine Cable Maintenance

- Improve understanding of submarine (undersea) cable maintenance and installation activities by partnering with the Department of State to conduct outreach to the undersea cable industry. *

Recreational Uses

- Develop an inventory of for-hire fishing, wildlife watching (whales, seabirds and other species) and recreational sailing/boating organizations that utilize the Monument.
- Contact and meet with those companies and organizations identified to learn more about how often they visit, what ports they use, what species they see and/or target, changes in observed species from past to present, their general observations and experiences in the Monument and their potential interest in becoming Monument volunteer stewards and/or engaging in community science projects.
- Develop and conduct a survey of for-hire vessels in the Monument region to better understand recreational fishing effort in the Monument.

Objective 1.5: Be prepared in the event of a spill or other incident in the Monument.

- Within two years, incorporate the Monument as an area of special concern in the USCG Region 1 Southeast Massachusetts/Rhode Island Area Contingency Plan. *
- Develop specific recommendations for spill response in the Monument and provide them to the Regional Response Team Region 1 (RRT-1) Committee for inclusion in the Regional Contingency Plan.
- Ensure at least one Monument staff member participates in a USCG preparedness for response exercise program (PREP) exercise and meeting of the USCG Region 1 Southeast Massachusetts/Rhode Island Area Committee each year.

Objective 1.6: Identify, nurture and honor Tribal Nation and Indigenous cultural connections to the Monument.

- Continue efforts to engage Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities in the Monument region to discuss their interest in collaboration. *
- Dependent on community interest, work with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities to include cultural knowledge and practices (consistent with long-term conservation and protection and recognizing Indigenous ownership of their knowledge) into management plan programs and activities.
- If there is interest, explore the possibility of working with Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities to rename the Monument and Monument features with traditional cultural names.

Objective 1.7: Increase awareness of and avoid impacts to underwater cultural, historical and archeological resources in the Monument.

- Review and apply as appropriate Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary's protocols for managing and reporting the discovery of underwater cultural resources; and provide researchers working in the Monument with protocols for what to do if they encounter a potential historical or cultural resource. *
- Provide researchers working in the Monument with best practices for avoiding impacts to cultural and historic resources.
- Expand relationships with underwater cultural and maritime archaeological researchers and identify ways to involve them in Monument exploration.

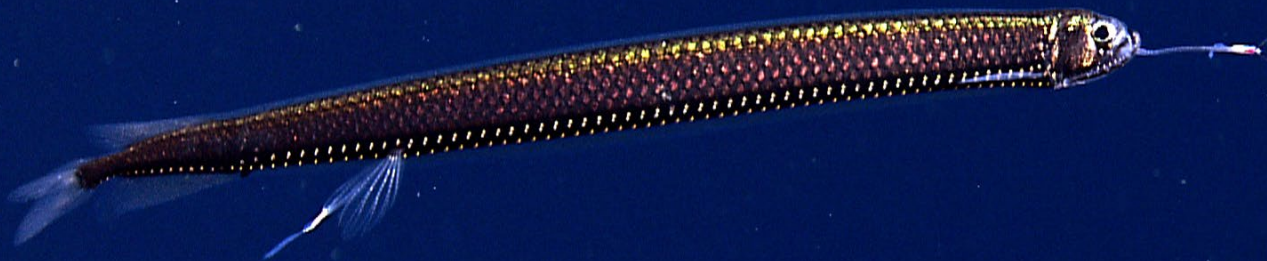
Objective 1.8: Develop a community stewardship program for the Monument.

- Provide information about the [FWS's Friends Partnerships](#) to individuals or groups who express interest in forming a Friends group for the Monument. *
- Distribute to relevant organizations outreach materials on 1) best practices for avoiding and minimizing impacts in the Monument to marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles, listed species (including giant manta ray and oceanic whitetip shark) and other marine life, and 2) how to respond to collisions, strikes, entanglement or hooking.

- Encourage commercial whale watching companies operating in the Monument to join NOAA's voluntary responsible whale watching program, [Whale SENSE](#).
- Explore developing a voluntary certification program for charter fishing guides in the Monument, similar to the Blue Star Program developed for Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in partnership with the American Sportfishing Association.
- Develop a volunteer "Monumental Stewards" program to partner with captains and crews of vessels (recreational fishing, wildlife watching, diving and sailing) that routinely visit or transit the Monument to assist in the collection of observational and scientific data.
- Establish a volunteer stewardship recognition program.

Objective 1.9: Adaptively manage the Monument.

- One Monument management team meeting each year will focus on consideration of climate change effects and adaptive management needs, which could include modifying the management plan based on new information and/or developing more detailed supplemental step-down plans for specific Monument programs.*
- Implement adaptive management toolkits, such as the [Marine Mammals Management Toolkit](#), to assess Monument resource management needs.
- Investigate research being done by NOAA's National Centers for Coastal and Ocean Science Hollings Marine Laboratory to propagate and restore deep-sea coral species in the Gulf of Mexico to determine the potential applicability of these restoration techniques in the Monument and North Atlantic region.



Goal 2

Establish staffing capacity to support essential management functions and develop partnerships to achieve effective joint management and community stewardship.

Objective 2.1: Deepen the NOAA and FWS joint-management relationship

- Host joint management team meetings on a fixed, frequent schedule, opportunistically pursuing in-person and team-building activities when resources and staffing allow. *
- At least once per year, create an opportunity for relationship-building between diverse groups of FWS and NOAA subject matter experts by leveraging existing workshops, conferences, and meetings. *
- Within one year, establish quarterly coordination meetings between the NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Administrator and FWS Northeast Regional Director to discuss the Monument. *
- Develop a joint-agency Monument fellowship or internship that provides participants with experience in both agencies and supports recruitment and retention of diversity into the marine conservation field.
- Provide NOAA and FWS Monument staff with professional growth opportunities through cross-agency work details.

Objective 2.2: Staff Monument management & stewardship, research & exploration, and engagement & education programs.

- Within two years, develop a basic joint FWS-NOAA staffing plan to address development of the three key program areas (management and stewardship, research and exploration and engagement and education). *
- Develop organizational charts based on the staffing plan and hire staff accordingly.
- Hire a third-party consultant to conduct an independent financial gap analysis to independently assess the staff and funding needed to manage the Monument.

Objective 2.3: Engage Tribal Nations, Federal agencies and States in management of the Monument and its resources.

- In accordance with Executive Order 13175 and in recognition of our government-to-government relationship, the Monument management team will consult with federally recognized Tribal Nations early and often regarding co-stewardship of the Monument and any Monument management decisions that could impact them. *
- At least twice per year, and more frequently as needed, meet and coordinate with the USCG, Navy and Department of State to provide updates and discuss coordination needs and topics of interest. *

- Provide relevant updates as needed to regional ocean management and governance groups, such as the Northeast Regional Ocean Council. *
- Conduct outreach to state recognized Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities to understand better their interests in the Monument and its management.
- Update federally recognized Tribal Nations (and state recognized Tribal Nations and other Indigenous communities as feasible), the New England Fishery Management Council, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission on Monument activities.
- Explore the potential utility of developing a coral reef action plan to guide stewardship of coral ecosystems in the Monument in accordance with the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2023.

Objective 2.4: Provide opportunities for the public to provide input on Monument management and engage with the Monument management team.

- On an annual basis, publish an accomplishments report that shares budget information, prioritization of activities based on budget and staffing capacity, a summary of permits issued and key accomplishments. *
- On an annual basis, host two community forums (one virtual and one in person), which are open to the public and which allow the public to learn about and comment on Monument management issues. *
- Explore the possibility of funding a third-party, neutral contractor to establish, invite participation in, and lead a community working group for the Monument.
- Present Monument projects and management activities at Advisory Council meetings for Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary.

Objective 2.5: Coordinate and partner with other coastal and marine protected areas to share resources and implement mutual or complementary management goals, objectives, and activities.

- At least once per year, and more frequently as needed, meet and coordinate with marine protected area managers in the Northeast, including Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, National Wildlife Refuges, and the proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary. *
- Provide technical assistance and share resources and information with staff from other marine national monuments, national marine sanctuaries and state and local marine protected areas.
- Contact National Wildlife Refuges, National Estuarine Research Reserves, National Parks, FWS Coastal Program Offices, state parks and other coastal and marine protected areas in the Northeast to identify any mutual or complementary management goals, objectives and activities that could be addressed through partnerships.

- Should the proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary be formally designated as a national marine sanctuary, explore a partnership to share resources (staff and funding) to support joint Atlantic canyon research, education and stewardship programs.

Objective 2.6: Support international marine protected area management efforts in the Atlantic Ocean.

- As needed, serve as a consultative resource for marine protected area managers in the Atlantic High Seas. *
- Explore potential international conservation designations for the Monument (such as international dark sky designation, International Union for Conservation of Nature Important Shark and Ray area designation).
- Coordinate and meet on an annual basis with marine protected area managers in the Canadian Atlantic Provinces to share updates and identify opportunities for collaboration in the following year.
- Contribute to the development of training programs for marine protected area managers.
- Attend and present at meetings of the International Marine Protected Areas Congress.
- Coordinate with the Department of State on any proposed marine protected areas in international waters in the North Atlantic.

Potential Partners

U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Navy, U.S. Department of State, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, National Park Service, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Mi'kmaq Nation(formerly Aroostook Band of Micmacs), Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Passamaquoddy Tribe - Indian Township, Passamaquoddy Tribe - Pleasant Point, Penobscot Nation, Shinnecock Indian Nation, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), State of Maine, State of New Hampshire, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, State of Rhode Island, State of Connecticut, State of New York, Northeast Ocean Planning Initiative, Northeast Regional Ocean Council, New England Fishery Management Council, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary, National Marine Protected Areas Center, North Atlantic Ports Association, American Sportfishing Association, North Atlantic Whale Watching Association, North American Submarine Cable Association, Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.



Exploration & Research Program

There are many gaps in information about the Monument's ecosystems, and more exploration and study are critical to ensuring effective management and stewardship. However, conducting research in and exploring the Monument is expensive, labor-intensive, and time-consuming to plan and implement, all of which is complicated by the Monument's remote location, extreme oceanic depths and weather conditions.

The Monument's research and exploration program for the next 15 years will focus on building partnerships and leveraging funding to conduct scientific research and exploration that answers fundamental questions about the Monument and contributes to the understanding and long-term conservation of deep-sea ecosystems. What organisms live in the Monument? What habitats are organisms using and how are they using them? How are the ecosystem processes in the deep-sea connected to the ecosystem processes at the surface? Why is biodiversity so high in the Monument? How is climate change affecting species and ecosystem processes in the Monument?

The timeline for meeting each objective is 15 years (the life of the management plan) unless otherwise noted. Coordination and/or collaboration between NOAA and the FWS is presumed for all activities. The depth and breadth to which each objective can be achieved will depend on funding availability.

Activities marked with an asterisk (*) are those activities that can reasonably be expected to occur within the next 1 to 15 years given current (fiscal year 2023) budget and staff support levels.

In most cases asterisked activities are associated with target timelines (for example, within two years, within five years). The start date for those timelines is the publication of the final management plan. All other activities are expected to need additional staff or resources to be implemented in a meaningful way (beyond preliminary planning). As funding becomes available to support these activities, timeline goals will be established and communicated with the public.

Goal 3

Conduct innovative, collaborative and interdisciplinary research and exploration to improve understanding of biological, physical, cultural and historical resources in the Monument.

Objective 3.1: Encourage and provide coordinated support for interdisciplinary research and exploration of the Monument.

- Actively participate in NOAA's Northeast Deep Sea Coral Research Initiative. *
- Host three Northwest Atlantic Canyons and Seamounts research symposia (aiming for one every five years) that bring researchers together to share ideas and research findings (and their applicability to Monument management). *
- On an annual basis, provide coordination support for NOAA and FWS research and exploration projects in the Monument, assisting as needed with logistics, planning and required permitting and consultations.
- Explore public-private partnerships and the development of competitive grant programs to increase funding for research and exploration in the Monument with a priority on interdisciplinary research.
- Identify strategies to address the limited availability of, or lack of opportunities for using, deepwater federal research vessels off the Northeast coast.
- Attend and present at research meetings, forums and conferences in order to raise awareness of the Monument and attract interest from the research community.
- Host informal and virtual "lunch and learn" research talks that allow researchers to connect.
- Opportunistically place researchers aboard vessels transiting or spending time in the Monument in order to collect scientific data.

Objective 3.2: Study the human history of the Monument to understand the cultural connections between humans and the Monument landscape on a geologic time scale, from ancient to modern times

- Within 10 years, contact Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities to gauge their interest in research into and documentation of their cultural connections to the Monument. *
- Contact non-Indigenous maritime and fishing communities to gauge their interest in research into and documentation of their cultural connections to the Monument.

- Support – by funding and/or sharing data – archaeological analysis of bathymetric (multibeam and sidescan sonar) data collected as part of ecological research and mapping in the Monument in order to identify potential shipwrecks and cultural resources.
- Depending upon interest, partner with Tribal Nations, Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities to develop and implement cultural and historical research projects.

Objective 3.3: Identify gaps in knowledge regarding species, habitats and ecosystem processes, as well as physical, chemical, geologic and oceanographic processes in the Monument.

- Within three years, develop a species list for the Monument, and make it available online (updating it on an annual basis). *
- Assemble a diverse, interdisciplinary working group of experts (federal and non-federal) to develop a research needs assessment for the species, habitats and ecosystems in the Monument, including deep-sea coral and sponge habitats, species that may be important to commercial fisheries outside of the Monument, highly pelagic seabirds and marine mammals. The group will also assess research needs related to habitat mapping; physical/chemical/geologic oceanographic processes, and the effects of climate change (ocean warming and acidification).
- Develop a long-term climate change monitoring plan for the Monument that identifies key indicators to monitor over the coming decades.

Objective 3.4: Conduct and support research that addresses priorities identified in the research needs assessment.

- Aim to fully or partially fund at least one research project in the Monument each year, prioritizing projects that will fill information gaps identified in the research needs assessment. *
- Prior to the next management plan review, develop and publish a condition report that summarizes the current status and health of resources in the Monument in order to inform the next management plan review process. *
- Within five years, establish standard practices and protocols for research of highly pelagic seabirds in the Monument that could also be applied outside of the Monument. *
- Identify and utilize existing community data-sharing platforms, such as eBird or iNaturalist, to better understand community science data in the Monument.
- Establish the Monument as a sentinel site for climate change monitoring in the North Atlantic by actively advocating for the inclusion of the Monument in long-term offshore and deep-sea climate change research.

Objective 3.5: Share Monument research results broadly.

- Include highlights of research findings in each Monument annual report. *
- Publish presentations from Monument research symposia online. *
- Require researchers whose work in the Monument is supported by NOAA and/or FWS funding to include an outreach component in their research plan.
- Invite researchers to share the results of their work with the public at Monument community forums.
- Connect researchers with local community groups interested in guest speakers.
- Incorporate into the Monument's media and communications plan (see Engagement & Education section) a strategy for sharing information about research findings.

Potential Partners

Mi'kmaq Nation, formerly Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Passamaquoddy Tribe – Indian Township, Passamaquoddy Tribe – Pleasant Point, Penobscot Nation, Shinnecock Indian Nation, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Department of State, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, State of Maine, State of New Hampshire, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, State of Rhode Island, State of Connecticut, State of New York, Northeast Ocean Planning Initiative, Northeast Regional Ocean Council, New England Fishery Management Council, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, University of Connecticut, University of New Hampshire, University of Maine, University of Rhode Island, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, University of San Diego, University of Connecticut, Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Smithsonian Institution, Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation, Mystic Aquarium, New England Aquarium, Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Program, Coastal Research & Education Society of Long Island, Inc., Audubon Society, Brookline Bird Club, Atlantic Marine Bird Cooperative, Ocean Data Network, maritime museums and historical societies.



Engagement & Education Program

Effective engagement and education programs are essential to achieving the Monument's vision and goals and to ensuring long-term stewardship and conservation of its ecosystems. Meaningful environmental engagement and education opportunities can enrich and change peoples' lives: inspiring them, altering their perspectives, invoking feelings of awe and wonder that increase happiness and satisfaction and motivating them to change their behavior for the benefit of the environment. The Monument has the potential to create these kinds of life-changing experiences for people.

The timeline for meeting each objective is 15 years (the life of the management plan) unless otherwise noted. Coordination and/or collaboration between NOAA and the FWS is presumed for all activities. The depth and breadth to which each objective can be achieved will depend on funding availability.

Activities marked with an asterisk (*) are those activities that can reasonably be expected to occur within the next 1 to 15 years given current (fiscal year 2023) budget and staff support levels.

In most cases asterisked activities are associated with target timelines (for example, within two years, within five years). The start date for those timelines is the publication of the final management plan. All other activities are expected to need additional staff or resources to be implemented in a meaningful way (beyond preliminary planning). As funding to support these activities is available, timeline goals will be determined and communicated with the public.

Goal 4

Increase the public's awareness of and sense of connection to the Monument and the deep sea.

Objective 4.1: Increase the funding available for Monument-related engagement and education efforts through partnership development.

- Explore public-private partnerships and the development of competitive grant programs with partners as ways to increase funding for innovative engagement and education projects that connect people to the Monument through virtual and in-person experiences.

Objective 4.2: Understand and characterize the Monument community; and within that community, increase general awareness of the Monument and its resources.

- Within three years, develop a strategic media and communications plan for the Monument. *
- Within three years, ensure that Monument outreach materials are made available in relevant languages other than English. *
- Within five years, develop and expand existing Monument stakeholder contact lists and databases. *
- Develop estimates of in-person visitation to the Monument by contacting user groups to ask about the frequency and timing of visits.
- Conduct a demographic and sociological analysis to better define the Monument community and identify the most effective ways to engage its members and make the Monument more accessible.
- Develop a digital inventory of photos and videos for the Monument to support digital storytelling.
- Convene a working group with zoo and aquarium representatives and agency outreach experts to develop a plan for developing virtual, immersive exhibits and experiences at zoos and aquariums nationwide that relate to North Atlantic deep-sea ecosystems.

Objective 4.3: Support development of education programs that connect students of all ages and backgrounds to the Monument and its resources.

- On an annual basis, capitalize on existing ocean education programs (such as those at local aquariums or NOAA's Ocean Exploration program) in order to collaboratively support the development of educational curricula and programming on North Atlantic canyon and seamount ecosystems that creates connections between people and the Monument and helps people understand the role they play in ocean ecosystems. *

- Ensure that curricula and programming related to the Monument is shared with the FWS's Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnerships in the Monument region (current Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership cities are Yonkers, New York; New Haven, Connecticut; Providence, Rhode Island; and Lowell, Massachusetts). *
- Within five years, develop or find existing contact lists or mechanisms for contacting secondary schools, particularly those that serve communities with environmental justice concerns in the Northeast, and distribute curricula and other classroom-relevant content on North Atlantic canyon and seamount ecosystems. *
- Work collaboratively to support the development of educational curricula and programming on the cultural importance of the Monument and its meaning to Tribal Nations, Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous historic and present-day fishing communities.
- Enhance existing opportunities for student and public participation in live deep-sea dives, such as developing simple deep-sea species identification guides that allow live dive viewers to participate in organism identification.
- Partner with zoos and aquariums to develop exhibits and other programming that introduce and teach visitors about the Monument and Northwest Atlantic canyon and seamount ecosystems.
- Develop and market a proposal for a mobile (on water or land) classroom and visitor center for the Monument that incorporates hands-on STEM activities and virtual reality deep-sea experiences.

Objective 4.4: Encourage community stewardship of the Monument through engagement and education programs geared toward in-person visitors.

- Identify at least three opportunities to bring members of Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities to visit the Monument on pelagic seabird watching trips.
- Develop outreach materials on best practices for on-site recreational activities in the Monument, including handouts, videos, and social media posts.
- Where there is interest, connect recreational in-person visitors to the research community and explore opportunities for collaboration and community science.
- Where there is interest, partner with recreational users of the Monument to share audiovisual and/or written stories about their trips to the Monument with the public.
- Actively recruit participants for the volunteer "Monumental stewards" community stewardship program through personal calls and emails.
- Participate in International Coastal Cleanup events in the Northeast region and provide information about the Monument to beach clean-up volunteers.

Objective 4.5: Inspire the next generation of deep-sea explorers, marine scientists, and marine protected area managers.

- Host at least five interns through internship programs that focus on recruiting from communities with environmental justice concerns.
- Develop at least two relationships with existing marine engineering and robotics training and educational programs to incorporate the Monument into their curricula.
- Develop at least two opportunities for at-sea learning experiences in the Monument for teachers and/or students (over 18), with a priority on students and teachers from communities with environmental justice concerns in the Northeast.
- Develop at least one virtual-reality or game-based digital experience that allows individuals to take immersive, virtual trips to the Monument.

Potential Partners

U.S. Department of State, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NOAA Ocean Exploration program, Mi'kmaq Nation, formerly Aroostook Band of Micmacs, Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Passamaquoddy Tribe – Indian Township, Passamaquoddy Tribe – Pleasant Point, Penobscot Nation, Shinnecock Indian Nation, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), State of Maine, State of New Hampshire, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, State of Rhode Island, State of Connecticut, State of New York, Northeast Ocean Planning Initiative, Northeast Regional Ocean Council, New England Fishery Management Council, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, proposed Hudson Canyon National Marine Sanctuary, North American Association for Environmental Education, Association of Zoos and Aquariums, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, University of Connecticut, University of New Hampshire, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, Mystic Aquarium, New England Aquarium, Aquarium Conservation Partnership, Providence Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership, Conservation Law Foundation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group, National Ocean Protection Coalition, Creation Justice Ministries, Sustainable Ocean Alliance in New York and Massachusetts, National Marine Educators Association (including regional chapters), Boys and Girls Clubs of America, YMCAs, after-school clubs, summer camps, Audubon Society.



Monitoring Progress & Evaluating Success

The Monument will publish an annual report each calendar year that provides an overview of the last fiscal year budget; how funding was spent; meaningful accomplishments; an overview of enforcement activities in the Monument; a report-out on available vessel tracking information for the Monument; and a report-out on a select number of metrics to monitor progress in implementing the activities in the management plan and evaluate success achieving each management plan goal and objective with a focus on progress toward outcomes.

GOAL 1: Conserve and protect the marine ecosystem within the Monument.

Metrics reported annually:

- Number of public participants in community forums
- Overview of permits issued for each category of use
- Miles of transect lines surveyed in the Monument (and for which species and/or habitats)

GOAL 2: Establish staffing capacity to support essential management functions and develop partnerships to allow for effective joint management and community stewardship.

Metrics reported annually:

- List of Monument staff and their roles, including interns and work detailees
- List of governments, agencies and organizations with whom the Monument coordinated

- Number of staff from other governments, agencies and organizations who helped implement management plan activities
- Number of volunteer stewards and/or volunteer steward hours

GOAL 3: Conduct innovative, collaborative and interdisciplinary research and exploration to improve understanding of biological, physical, cultural and historical resources in the Monument.

Metrics reported annually:


- Number of research studies that occurred in the Monument and/or number of research days in the Monument
- Dollar amount invested in on-the-ground research in the Monument
- Number of reports and publications contributing to the understanding of Monument resources
- Number of disciplines represented in Monument research trips
- Number of attendees at research “lunch and learn” talks and research symposia

GOAL 4: Increase the public’s awareness of and sense of connection to the Monument and the deep sea.

Metrics reported annually:

- Dollar amount invested in on-the-ground Monument engagement and education programs
- Estimated number of wildlife watching trips in the Monument
- Estimated number of recreational fishing trips in the Monument
- Number of outreach events in which the Monument actively participated
- Number of students engaged with the Monument through internships or student experiences
- Number of teachers engaged with the Monument through teacher training or implementation of Monument-related educational curricula

As resources and staffing within the Monument and its partners grow, these metrics may be modified to reflect expanding program capacity. Changes in metrics will be shared with the public in the Monument’s annual report.

A photograph of a squid and a nudibranch on a sandy beach. The squid is in the upper left, partially buried in the sand, with its large eyes visible. The nudibranch is in the lower left, a long, pinkish, segmented creature. The background is a textured, brownish sand.

Permitting System Overview

Presidential Proclamation 9496 identifies a suite of regulated activities that may be permitted in the Monument in accordance with international law. The FWS and NOAA Fisheries considered these uses within the context of their legal authorities and developed the following general approach to permitting activities and uses within the Monument.

The management plan is a planning document; it is a roadmap and a guide, and it does not explicitly authorize or permit any specific activities within the Monument. After publication of the final management plan, the FWS, in coordination with NOAA, will, to the extent required by law, subject proposed uses to the compatibility process and develop and publish for public comment compatibility determinations for uses discussed here, in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 as amended by the Improvement Act of 1997. These compatibility determinations will provide greater detail on FWS and NOAA permitting processes and requirements for uses in the Monument, which are discussed broadly here. The public will have an opportunity to comment on draft compatibility determinations before they are finalized.

Utilizing the completed compatibility determinations, the Monument management team will develop a standalone, user-friendly permitting guide for the Monument, and develop a webpage that describes permitting requirements (see Management & Stewardship objective 1.1).

This permitting system overview does not speak to permits or authorizations that could be required from other agencies for projects in the Monument. Anyone conducting activities in the Monument must be in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations and have all necessary permits and authorizations in hand before activities can start.

The Monument management team's general approach to permitting activities and uses in the Monument is to utilize as a foundation NOAA Fisheries' existing permitting system

for recreational fishing, educational trips, research and photography and filming. NOAA Fisheries has detailed and comprehensive websites explaining its permitting processes and ocean user groups are familiar with these permitting processes. FWS special use permits are anticipated to be required for some activities in the Monument for which NOAA does not currently have existing permitting structures in place or for which the FWS is required to issue permits.

The aim is to develop a permitting system that minimizes the need to obtain permits from both the FWS and NOAA for Monument-specific projects; allows for recreational enjoyment of the Monument, such as fishing, wildlife watching, diving and boating; provides appropriate oversight of activities in the Monument; and ensures that Monument resources are protected in perpetuity.

The FWS and NOAA will consult with each other on and share information about permit applications that have been received and are being processed for activities in the Monument. The agencies and will update the public on the permits that are issued each year through the Monument's annual report (see Management & Stewardship Program, objective 2.4).

The Monument management team cannot anticipate every activity that could be proposed in the Monument. This permitting system overview discusses the range of common activities that Monument staff foreseeably anticipate will occur or are most likely to occur in the Monument. Should emerging technologies or other factors lead to the proposal of unanticipated activities in the Monument, the management team will evaluate the compatibility of those activities with the Monument's establishing purpose, rules, and regulations.

Requirements Common to All Uses and Activities ---

NOAA and the FWS will not require additional permits or authorizations from each other for scientific research and management activities that either agency undertakes within the Monument (except that both agencies agree to adhere to agency requirements that pre-date Monument creation, Appendix C). Thus, activities for which NOAA or the FWS is a partner would not be subject to any FWS special use permit requirements for the Monument that may be implemented. Specifically, regarding scientific research, Presidential Proclamation 9496 states that, "the prohibitions required by the proclamation shall not restrict scientific exploration or research activities by or for the Secretaries, and nothing in this proclamation shall be construed to require a permit or other authorization from the Secretary for their respective scientific activities."

Activities taking place in the Monument must adhere to all relevant laws and regulations, including but not limited to USCG Navigation Rules, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act and Improvement Act, Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Fishery Management Act and Clean Water Act. The Monument management team asks that all visitors to the Monument follow [NOAA Fisheries' marine life viewing guidelines](#).

Please note that commercial fishing is not permitted in the Monument as of September 15, 2023, and any recreational fishing, educational trips, research or photography and filming activities that involve commercial fishing (such as the sale of fish caught recreationally) are prohibited. Commercial fishing equipment on vessels must be stowed and not available for immediate use² during passage without interruption through the Monument.

Seafloor disturbance in the Monument is prohibited with exceptions for anchoring scientific instrumentation to the seafloor and submarine cable maintenance and installation (see the research section below for more information). Regular anchors that lodge in the seafloor are prohibited in the Monument. Use of sea anchors (typically an object dragged behind the vessel in the water column to stabilize drift) is allowed so long as they do not anchor the vessel to the seafloor or alter submerged lands.

The Monument management team asks those who visit the Monument on a regular basis to consider becoming volunteer stewards. Volunteer stewards will support Monument management and research activities by collecting observational data and other types of scientific information in the Monument.

Recreational Fishing

NOAA Fisheries will permit and regulate recreational fisheries in the Monument consistent with its existing recreational fishing permitting program and the prohibitions listed in Presidential Proclamation 9496. NOAA Fisheries and the FWS do not propose to require any permits beyond those currently required by NOAA Fisheries to recreationally fish in the Monument.

NOAA Fisheries implements a comprehensive permitting program for recreational fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region. For the most up to date information on saltwater recreational fishing rules and regulations, please visit [NOAA Fisheries' recreational saltwater fishing website](#).

Anglers aged 16 or older need a permit to fish in federal waters. Anglers who obtain a saltwater fishing license and/or registration from the state where they depart for the Monument will automatically be registered in the National Saltwater Angler Registry. If fishing in the Monument without a state fishing license, anglers may need to register directly with the National Saltwater Angler Registry. Visit NOAA Fisheries' [National Saltwater Angler Registry website](#) to learn more about these requirements.

NOAA Fisheries' permitting program may require those fishing recreationally from either for-hire charter/headboats or private vessels to have recreational fishing permits. These permits come with a number of follow-on rules and regulations that pertain to size/catch limitations and seasonal/annual closures, as well as reporting obligations. The Monument

² Not available for immediate use means that the gear is not being used for fishing and is stowed in conformance with one of the methods defined at 50 CFR § 648.2.

management team's current understanding is that recreational fishing effort in the Monument is predominantly for highly migratory species, such as tuna and swordfish, and consists of both for-hire and private vessels.

Recreational and for-hire fishing for tunas, sharks, swordfish, and billfish must be done from a vessel that has a federal [Highly Migratory Species](#) permit. For a person aboard a vessel that is operating as a charter vessel or headboat to fish for or possess Atlantic dolphin or wahoo, in or from the Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone, a valid charter vessel/headboat permit for Atlantic dolphin and wahoo must have been issued by NOAA Fisheries' Southeast Regional Fisheries Office to the vessel and must be on board. Owners and operators of for-hire vessels, as well as recreational tilefish vessels, that fish in federal waters must get [permits from NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office](#). In some states, owners and operators of charter boats, head boats, and guide boats must register their vessels with NOAA.

Recreational anglers need to check NOAA Fisheries' [regulations](#) for each species before going fishing, as the size and number that can be kept differs by species and time of year. Anglers must adhere to all relevant laws and regulations in the Monument, including the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act.

The Monument management team asks all anglers in the Monument to please fish responsibly and follow [recreational fishing best practices](#).

Research

Only non-NOAA and non-FWS research projects are anticipated to be required to obtain a Monument-specific special use permit to conduct research in the Monument, pending issuance of a compatibility determination for research activities (a draft of which will be available for public review and comment). If either NOAA or the FWS is a partner on a research project in the Monument, that project does not require a Monument-specific permit. Other permits may be required for research projects in accordance with laws including but not limited to the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

NOAA Fisheries currently issues a variety of permits for research on its trust resources (including sea turtles, sturgeon, and marine mammals) under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act. These permitting requirements would not be modified within the Monument boundaries. For more information on NOAA Fisheries' permitting requirements, please visit NOAA Fisheries' websites on [Endangered Species Act scientific research and enhancement permits](#) and [marine mammal scientific research and enhancement permits](#).

The FWS also currently issues a variety of permits for research on its trust resources (which, in the Monument, include seabirds and migratory birds) under the [Endangered Species Act](#) and [Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#). These permitting requirements would not be modified within the Monument boundaries.

If a research project proposed in the Monument that is **NOT** affiliated with the FWS or NOAA will require review and permitting by NOAA Fisheries under the Endangered Species Act or Marine Mammal Protection Act, then Monument staff will coordinate with NOAA staff on review of that permit application, and ***it is anticipated that no additional FWS Monument-specific special use permit would be required.***

If a research project proposed in the Monument does **NOT** include the FWS or NOAA as a partner and does **NOT** require a permit from NOAA Fisheries under the Endangered Species Act or Marine Mammal Protection Act, ***it is anticipated that the researcher would be required to obtain a FWS-issued Research and Monitoring Special Use Permit (issued under the authorities of the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act and Improvement Act) for the research activity.***

In this way, all non-NOAA and non-FWS-affiliated research in the Monument would be permitted by either NOAA Fisheries or the FWS. In addition to any required permits, NOAA Fisheries will also continue to offer [voluntary letters of scientific research authorization](#) to researchers doing work in the Monument who request them.

Researchers must adhere to all relevant laws and regulations in the Monument and secure all authorizations and permits required by other agencies for their research. Multiple permits and authorizations are required from other Federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and USCG, for anchoring any scientific instrumentation to the seafloor (regardless of location in or outside of the Monument).

Educational Trips

At-sea educational trips occur on occasion in the Monument. If either NOAA or the FWS is a partner on or sponsor of an at-sea educational trip project in the Monument, that trip will not require a Monument-specific permit.

If neither NOAA or the FWS are a partner on an at-sea educational trip, and if that trip will involve fishing-related educational activities, then the trip will require an [Exempted Educational Activity Authorization](#) from NOAA Fisheries. It is anticipated that no additional Monument-specific permit from the FWS would be required.

If neither NOAA nor the FWS are a partner on an at-sea educational trip, and that trip will **NOT** involve fishing-related educational activities, then it is anticipated that the trip would require a Monument-specific special use permit from the FWS, pending issuance of a compatibility determination (a draft of which will be available for public review and comment).

In this way, all at-sea educational trips in the Monument that are not partnered with NOAA or the FWS would require permits.

Photography and Filming

The Monument management team does not propose to require any permits for recreational photography and filming that is for personal use and enjoyment only. An example of this is taking photos and making videos while whale watching to share with friends and family.

Commercial filming in the Monument will require a commercial special use permit from the FWS, pending issuance of a compatibility determination (a draft of which will be available for public review and comment). Commercial filming that involves whales, dolphins and/or seals may also require a permit from NOAA Fisheries in accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act. It is important to contact the FWS and NOAA Fisheries as soon as possible to determine whether a permit is needed.

Still photography in the Monument in all but a few situations is not anticipated to require a special use permit from the FWS unless the activity meets the criteria at 43 C.F.R. § 5.2(b). Additional details will be provided in a forthcoming draft compatibility determination.

If the still photography is intended for commercial distribution and involves whales, dolphins and/or seals, a permit from NOAA Fisheries under the Marine Mammal Protection Act may be required. It is important to contact NOAA Fisheries as soon as possible if you are planning a commercial still photography project that involves whales, dolphins and/or seals to determine whether a permit is required.

Wildlife watching, blue water diving and sailing/boating

NOAA Fisheries has no existing permitting requirements for passive recreational activities such as wildlife watching, diving, sailing, and boating in the region that includes the Monument. Consistent with Presidential Proclamation 9496, the Monument management team does not propose to create or require individual NOAA or FWS permits for these activities.



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