

MPR Issues Identified (alphabetical Z-A)

- Water Quality
- Offshore Development
- Ocean Literacy
- Native Hawaiian Culture
- Marine Animal Assessment and Response
- Maritime Heritage
- Management Effectiveness
- Humpback Whale Protections
- Enforcement
- Ecosystem Protections: Species and Habitats
- Climate Change

Water Quality

Water quality is essential to the health of the marine ecosystem. Numerous comments from community members throughout Hawai'i stated that water quality protection should be a priority of the sanctuary. Concerns were raised over the possible effects of stormwater runoff, injection wells, and vessel discharge on marine wildlife as well as human health and safety. Additionally, community members stated a need for research and monitoring programs and collaborative efforts to address water quality issues within the sanctuary.

Offshore Development

Offshore development activities include structures from the coastline to the sanctuary boundary. Examples noted in public comments included wind and wave energy structures, underwater cables, and aquaculture cages. Comments were received that stated concern over potential impacts to cultural and biological resources and the siting of development activities. Other comments suggested that such development activities have not been shown to have adverse impacts on marine resources. Community members suggested using the best available science and placed-based knowledge when considering development activities within the sanctuary.

Ocean Literacy

Enhancing the public's awareness and appreciation of the Humpback whales has been central to the sanctuary's mission. Scoping comments emphasized a need for the sanctuary to continue to support outreach and education. While outreach and education was highlighted in many of the comments, it is a tool the sanctuary will use to address the priority issues. **Education** is defined as working with formal (classroom) and informal (visitor center/beach or in the field experience) groups. **Outreach** refers to disseminating information to the general public through outreach events, lectures, web material, and printed materials. Ocean Literacy, which is the understanding of the ocean's influence on you and your influence on the ocean, will be the overarching theme in all education and outreach products. The need to increase ocean literacy among the general public has been identified as a priority issue for the sanctuary.

Native Hawaiian Culture

In order to effectively manage the biological resources which are an integral component of the ecosystems in Hawai'i, the sanctuary has been asked to include the cultural perspectives which are unique to these islands. Native Hawaiian culture encompasses strong underlying values which are deeply rooted in the natural environment, and these values foster a cohesive

relationship with the land and sea. Native Hawaiians who inhabited these islands prior to western contact developed a living system which allowed them to live sustainably with their natural environment. Communities and families still utilize cultural practices in their everyday lives, and many community comments collected in the scoping comment period addressed “cultural gathering rights”. The sanctuary will continue to honor and respect the heritage and living culture of Native Hawaiians and will incorporate traditional values and management principles to guide resource management decisions in the future.

Maritime Heritage

Maritime heritage features the historical, cultural, and archaeological resources which reflect our multicultural seafaring history, with historic shipwrecks being the most familiar to the public. A significant number of scoping comments were received that recognized the unique historical and archaeological value of maritime heritage resources, and the need for more education and outreach and ocean stewardship of maritime heritage resources. While inventory and protection of these resources are mandated by state and federal laws, there has been little to no management to date in Hawaii. Potential constituent groups that may be affected by this issues include sport divers, archaeologists, historians, and even fishermen and marine biologists.

Marine Animal Assessment and Response

Sanctuary staff are recognized experts that provide leadership in mitigating impacts of whale entanglements in Hawaii, nationally and internationally. The public expressed concern over the need to respond to animals in distress, including whales, dolphins, turtles and monk seals. A potential strategy for addressing this issue will be to use the entanglement response network to form an interagency task force to consider the expansion of these efforts.

Management Effectiveness

Management effectiveness was identified as a primary concern in the public comments. Concerns expressed included comments related to budget, staffing and programs as well as comments requesting the sanctuary be more involved in protecting resources in Hawaii. Many of the comments stated the need to work more collaboratively with partner agencies, organizations and communities. A collaborative and coordinated approach is essential to effective management of a sanctuary in the main Hawaiian Islands.

Humpback Whale Protections

The need to increase humpback whale protections emerged as a priority issue from the public comments. Included in this issue are comments that stated the whales were already protected by other laws and that the sanctuary was not needed. While the sanctuary’s primary purpose is to protect humpback whales and their habitat, several current and emerging threats were identified as primary concerns. Current knowledge of the humpback whales that use the sanctuary will be reassessed, such as population structure, abundance and trends, and habitat use and preferences in light of the current and emerging threats and regulations. Important data gaps will be identified for possible consideration in the sanctuary’s new management plan.

Ecosystem Protections: Species and Habitats

The ecosystem protection (species and habitat) issue emerged from comments regarding whether to expand the scope of the sanctuary beyond humpback whales and their habitat. Comments included under this issue range from the sanctuary should be dissolved to the sanctuary should expand to include additional resources and boundaries. Comments addressing threats and environmental impacts are also included in this issue. The consideration of including additional species may transition the sanctuary away from a species-specific focus and align it with the rest of the sanctuaries program which evaluates sites from a sanctuary ecology approach. The

proposed strategy for addressing this issue is to convene a technical and scientific working group coupled with geospatial analysis coordinated by sanctuary staff. The group would be charged with developing a list of signature species and their habitats to be added, such as monk seals, spinner dolphins, sea turtles, and corals. The group will evaluate what role the sanctuary can play in the conservation and management of the signature species and habitats based on existing Federal and State protections and management plans. The biological and policy assessment will inform what, if any, boundary changes should be made.

Enforcement

Enforcement encompasses a broad number of management strategies such as voluntary compliance, violations, penalty and fines, protocols and community engagement. The issue of enforcement was brought up in numerous comments with a wide range of perspectives from no new regulations, enforcing existing regulations, increased enforcement presence and budget to creating new regulations to protect humpback whales and other marine resources. Specific suggestions included having speed limits for vessels and fines for derelict nets. The effectiveness of current enforcement is one of the key aspects of this issue that will be addressed.

Climate Change

Global warming, climate change and ocean acidification were identified in the comments as issues that the sanctuary should address in order to protect its marine resources. The sanctuary could also contribute to protecting resources by going green and increasing energy efficiency in its operations. All these topics will be considered under this priority issue of climate change.