

Background Material for the OCNMS Condition Report
1/4/08

The following Q &A provides background information relating to this endeavor.

1. What is a Condition Report?

A Condition Report provides a summary of resources in the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, pressures on those resources, the current condition and trends, and management responses to the pressures that threaten the integrity of the marine environment. Specifically, the Condition Report will include information on the status and trends of water quality, habitat, living resources and maritime archaeological resources and the human activities that affect them.

2. What is the goal of the OCNMS Condition Report?

The OCNMS Condition Report will document the condition of sanctuary resources based on OCNMS staff judgments after consultation with selected partners and best available information. The report will serve as a tool to determine if the sanctuary is achieving its resource protection and improvement goals as reflected in NMSP performance measures.

3. Who is the audience?

The report will serve as a supporting document during the OCNMS Management Plan Review Process, to be used by constituents who desire to participate in that process. It will also serve as a reporting tool to be used by policy makers, particularly within NOAA and DOC. The report will also be used as an education and outreach tool. It will be distributed to constituents and made available to the general public at events and on the internet (all reports will be posted on the NMSP website). The report will not be utilized by staff at the site level to make management decisions; managers will continue to reference more specific monitoring work and data accumulated at the site and by partners.

4. What is the format of the report?

Condition Reports for all sanctuaries will follow the same format. Please see the Stellwagen Bank or Fagatele Bay NMS reports as a guide (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/condition/>). Reports will be approximately 25 – 30 pages long (with an additional 10 pages for an Appendix). All reports will include the same basic elements:

1. Overview
2. Site History and Resources
3. Pressures on the Sanctuary
4. State of Sanctuary Resources
5. Response to Pressures
6. References
7. Appendix – Explanation of the Questions

5. How will resource condition be quantified?

The Condition Report uses a set of 17 questions as a tool to report on the status and trends of sanctuary resources. These questions relate to water, habitat, living resources, and maritime archaeological resources. Please see the Appendix in the Stellwagen Bank NMS report to see the full list of questions (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/condition/>).

6. Where did the set of 17 questions originate?

The questions derive from the National Marine Sanctuary Program mission, and a system-wide monitoring framework (National Marine Sanctuary Program, 2004 <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/library/national/swim04.pdf>) developed to ensure the timely flow of data and information to those responsible for managing and protecting resources in the ocean and coastal zone, and to those that use, depend on, and study the ecosystems encompassed by the sanctuaries. Questions 1-4 relate to Water Quality, questions 5-8 relate to Habitat, questions 9-14 relate to Living Resources, and questions 15-17 relate to Maritime Archaeological Resources.

The questions are general in nature so that they can be asked within any marine ecosystem and at any spatial scale. Much more specific questions are asked at any given marine sanctuary, forming the basis for site monitoring programs. These specific questions are not the focus of the Condition Report, but may be used to help answer the 17 questions posed here.

7. What are the possible responses for each question?

Each question will be answered using a "status and trends" reporting system. Each question will be assigned a color to denote status and a symbol to denote the trend.

Status:



- Trends:**
- ▲ Conditions appear to be improving.
 - Conditions do not appear to be changing.
 - ▼ Conditions appear to be declining.
 - ? Undetermined trend.
 - N/A Question not applicable.

8. How is a color and symbol selected?

The Appendix (Rating Scheme for System-Wide Monitoring Questions) found in the Stellwagen Bank and Fagatele Bay NMS Condition Reports (<http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/condition/>) will be included in every Condition Report. Its purpose is to clarify the 17 questions and the possible responses for each question. Sanctuary staff and partners are asked to utilize this guidance, as well as their own informed and detailed understanding of the site to make judgments about the status and trends of sanctuary resources.

In the Appendix, following a brief discussion about each question, statements are presented that are to be used to judge the status and assign a corresponding color code. These statements are customized for each question and provide a way to standardize judgments across the sanctuary system.

9. What information will be given to support each question's answer?

In the report text will explain the basis for judgment for determining the status and trend. This text will summarize monitoring findings relating to each question. Associated graphs, tables and other images will also be used to support each judgment. In general, preparers should base their judgment of status and trends on changes that have resulted from anthropogenic impacts that can be managed rather than natural drivers that can not be.

10. How detailed is the report?

All reports will be fairly high level and should be thought of as executive summaries that summarize the condition of the sanctuaries. The Condition Reports are not the place for presenting the bulk of monitoring data that is taking place at the sanctuary; rather it is a summary of findings from any and all monitoring programs that exist at a site.

11. How often are the reports revised?

The Condition Report will be revised every five years, preferable being completed near the beginning of the management plan review process. Sections of the web-based reports may be changed in the interim, as new information becomes available.

12. Are the reports reviewed?

Yes, the NMSP, in consultation with other NOAA legal and program staff, has determined that the Condition Reports are appropriately considered as Influential Scientific Information. For this reason, these reports are subject to the review requirements of the White House Office of Management and Budget as outlined in the Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. More information on this is on the Office of the Chief Information Officer website (http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/info_quality.html).