

United States  
Coast Guard



## Marine Protected Species Strategic Plan

A collage of images showing marine conservation efforts: a large whale being lifted by a crane, a Coast Guard boat (41455) with crew members, a person holding a net, a whale breaching the water, and a person holding a small fish.

# *OCEAN STEWARD*

**Stewardship of the nation's marine  
protected species**

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LETTER OF PROMULGATION

From: Commandant

To: Distribution

1. Protecting our nation's natural resources is one of the Coast Guard's five strategic goals. Along with Maritime Safety, Maritime Security, Maritime Mobility, and National Defense, Protection of Natural Resources is one of the basic reasons the taxpayers fund the Coast Guard each year. Hence, it is one of the outcomes to which our entire organizational effort – programs, policies, and assets – should be dedicated. In our Strategic Plan 1999, I defined the Protection of Natural Resources Strategic Goals as "the elimination of environmental damage and natural resource degradation associated with all maritime activities." A vital aspect of achieving this goal is helping the nation recover and maintain healthy populations of marine protected species. OCEAN STEWARD is our strategic plan for making that happen.

2. OCEAN STEWARD provides the emphasis operational commanders, training commands, and administrative staffs need to prioritize and execute this increasingly important mission. The core idea behind OCEAN STEWARD is the premise that all of us, as members of the Coast Guard, have a responsibility to be good stewards of the ocean. If we adhere to this premise as individuals, then the Coast Guard, as an organization, will make great progress toward achieving OCEAN STEWARD's objectives.

3. As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our nation is becoming increasingly concerned about the ocean and the state of its living marine resources. Coast Guard leadership in protecting marine species, however, is nothing new; it dates back as far as the Fur Seal Act of 1897. The Coast Guard remains committed to continuing that tradition of leadership, and OCEAN STEWARD is your guide in this important endeavor.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Loy".  
**JAMES M. LOY**

Encl: (1) OCEAN STEWARD, Protected Living Marine Resources Strategic Plan

Dist: CG LANTAREA (A, Am, Ao), CG PACAREA (P, Pm, Po), CG DISTRICTS (d, m, o), CG ACADEMY, CG INSTITUTE, CG TRACEN Yorktown, CG TRACEN Cape May, CG TRACEN Petaluma, CG PACAREA TRATEAM, CG RFTC Cape Cod MA, CG RFTC Charleston SC, CG RFTC New Orleans LA, CG RFTC Kodiak AK, CG R&DC



**OCEAN STEWARD**  
**U.S. Coast Guard Marine Protected Species Strategic Plan**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Ocean Steward's Purpose _____	1
Mission Statement _____	1
Guiding Principal _____	1
Ocean Steward Strategic Plan _____	2
Strategy 1 _____	3
Strategy 2 _____	4
Strategy 3 _____	5
Strategy 4 _____	5





## OCEAN STEWARD'S PURPOSE

The purpose of Ocean Steward is to help the Coast Guard achieve its strategic goal Protection of Natural Resources and its performance goal of enforcing federal regulations that result in all living marine resources achieving healthy, sustainable populations. Ocean Steward provides a clearly defined strategy for our role in helping the nation recover and maintain healthy populations of marine protected species; it captures the things we are already doing and provides a comprehensive list of objectives we can achieve if we are provided the necessary resources. Ocean Steward complements our fisheries enforcement strategic plan, Ocean Guardian. Together, Ocean Steward and Ocean Guardian provide a roadmap for the Coast Guard's efforts in ensuring our nation's waterways and their ecosystems remain productive by protecting all our nation's living marine resources from degradation.

## MISSION STATEMENT

**We will enforce and comply with marine protected species regulations, work with other agencies and organizations to develop appropriate regulations for marine protected species recovery, and publicize our efforts to gain the support and resources necessary to fully implement ocean steward.**

The Coast Guard will implement a formal MPS strategy, Ocean Steward, with a clear, focused vision. We will educate and train our members to make certain every individual understands that stewardship of the ocean environment is a fundamental part of their duty. We will use existing enforcement authorities, and seek new authorities as necessary, to help reduce the risks of extinction and recover marine protected

species populations. We will conduct our own operations so as to minimize our impact on marine protected species. We will assess the impact on marine protected species when developing both internal and external regulations and policies. We will work closely with other federal, state and local governments, as well as environmental and research organizations, to carry out the nation's MPS policies. We will inform the public of both the importance of the mission and the ways in which they can help lessen the impact of human activities on marine protected species. We will widely publicize our strategy and results to inform policymakers and the public of the value of our MPS efforts.

## GUIDING PRINCIPAL

**We are stewards of the ocean**

The guiding principle behind Ocean Steward is instilling in every member of the Coast Guard the belief that each individual is a steward of the ocean. This concept must be promoted throughout the entire organization. Our training commands – Training Center Cape May, the Coast Guard Academy, Training Center Yorktown, Training Center Petaluma, the Maritime Law Enforcement Academy, and the Regional Fisheries Training Centers – should produce graduates who understand and believe preservation of marine protected species is a fundamental Coast Guard responsibility.

Our boarding officers and marine inspectors should know, and want to know, what marine protected species exist in their area of responsibility, the regulations that exist to protect them, and how his or her actions can promote species recovery. Our operations and marine safety units should know, and want to know, the concerns of federal, state and local officials, and should work cooperatively with them. Our stations, cutters and marine safety



offices should distribute appropriate educational literature. At every opportunity Coast Guard personnel should let the public know we are on watch protecting their oceans and waterways, and inform them of what they can do to help eliminate the degradation of natural resources associated with maritime activities. Our deck watch officers, aircrews and coxswains should be able to recognize the marine protected species they are likely to encounter and report sightings to interested organizations. Our staff officers and port operations personnel should ensure, and want to ensure, recovery of marine protected species is taken into account when making policy decisions, and they should prioritize the workloads of their personnel to reflect this emphasis.

In short, every member of the Coast Guard must think of himself or herself as a steward of the ocean. Committing to that, both organizationally and individually, we will enable us to reach our overarching protection of natural resources strategic goal.

## OCEAN STEWARD STRATEGIC GOAL

**Eliminate environmental damage and natural resource degradation associated with all maritime activities.**

The nation's waterways and their ecosystems are vital to our economy and health. If the United States is to enjoy a rich, diverse and sustainable ocean environment, then we must halt the degradation of our ocean's natural resources associated with maritime activities. This includes ensuring our country's marine protected species are provided the protection necessary to help their populations recover to healthy, sustainable levels. Providing adequate protection will require the United States to enact and enforce a wide range of regulations to govern marine resource management and use. Ocean Steward will enable the Coast Guard, as the nation's

primary at sea law enforcement agency, to develop and enforce those regulations necessary to help recover and maintain our country's marine protected species. Moreover, Ocean Steward will ensure the Coast Guard is viewed as a leader in regional, national and international efforts to protect the nation's marine ecosystems.

## OCEAN STEWARD STRATEGIES

### 1) Raise the Profile of the MPS Mission.

We will raise the profile of the MPS mission to the status of missions such as maritime drug interdiction, marine pollution prevention and fisheries enforcement.

### 2) Obtain Necessary Resources and Authorities.

We will prioritize existing resources, use existing authorities, and seek additional resources and authorities as necessary to implement Ocean Steward.

### 3) Partner with Other Agencies.

We will work closely with other agencies and organizations involved in the preservation and recovery of marine protected species to eliminate redundancy, and provide a clear link between enforcement and management.

### 4) Publicize Our Efforts.

We will stress the importance of the Coast Guard's role as part of a comprehensive management scheme and highlight our successful efforts to the public.





## STRATEGY 1: RAISE THE PROFILE OF THE MPS MISSION

### DISCUSSION:

If the Coast Guard is to be truly committed to protecting the ocean and its resources, then, in the eyes of our own people, recovery of marine protected species must be just as important as traditional missions such as maritime drug interdiction, marine pollution prevention, and fisheries enforcement. We must go beyond development of single initiatives in response to pressure or crisis. We should approach MPS issues with the same proactive, integrated, long-term strategy we use for addressing counter-drug operations, fisheries law enforcement, and commercial vessel safety. Every member of the Coast Guard must know it is part of our job to help recover and maintain our marine protected species, just as they know it is our job to rescue those in distress. If we understand this concept individually, we will certainly convey that image organizationally.

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Incorporate Marine Protected Species (MPS) issues into CG performance planning.
- Develop Area and District MPS operating and enforcement guidance.
- Emphasize area specific MPS issues in the curriculum of all 5 Regional Fisheries Training Centers (RFTC).
- Identify ways to increase CG Auxiliary participation in MPS mission.
- Identify ways to increase focus on MPS issues in Sea Partners program.
- Measure the effectiveness of current MPS initiatives such as compliance with the Mandatory Ship Reporting System (MSR) and manatee speed zone regulations.

- Designate MPS points of contact (POC) at HQ/Areas/Districts, and create a CG network for information flow on MPS issues.
- Increase Endangered Species Act/Marine Mammal Protection Act enforcement pulse ops during critical seasons.
- Ensure current and potential MPS missions (patrol of remote coral reefs, removal of derelict fishing gear, assisting in disentanglement of whales, etc.) are included in Deepwater decision making process.



- Increase CG participation in environmental cleanup events such as the Center for Marine Conservation's annual International Coastal Clean Up.
- Incorporate MPS mission into curriculum of all entry-level and accession training programs (e.g., Officer Candidate School, the Academy, Cape May, and Civilian Indoctrination).
- Incorporate MPS issues into International Maritime Officers Course and Mobile Training Teams.
- Designate MPS points of contact at appropriate CG units.
- Include MPS guidance in Maritime Law Enforcement Manual updates.
- Include MPS guidance in Marine Safety Manual updates.



- Create HQ cross-directorate MPS office.
- Incorporate MPS questions into Servicewide Examinations.
- Add MPS material to appropriate A School curricula (e.g., BM, MST).

## STRATEGY 2: OBTAIN NECESSARY RESOURCES AND AUTHORITIES

### DISCUSSION:

As national sentiment builds for increasing the protection of our oceans, the Coast Guard should be at the top of the list of agencies that the public demands to be adequately funded. We will reinforce this by documenting our need for, and requesting, the additional resources required to meet the increasing enforcement and regulatory demands in the oceans environment. The public must view the Coast Guard as a leader in preserving our oceans and their protected species. When it is the right thing to do, we will seek to expand our enforcement and regulatory roles, and not shy away for fear of acquiring additional mandates or becoming the target of legal action. If we can be leaders in maritime search and rescue, drug interdiction and pollution prevention, then we can also become leaders in the recovery of marine protected species. We can:

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Request funding for implementation of Ocean Steward through annual budgeting and resource allocation processes.
- Include resource hour requests for implementation of Ocean Steward in input to the annual Operational Guidance letter.
- Assess the need for more enforcement authority to protect resources of

various marine protected areas and sanctuaries.

- Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the Mandatory Ship Reporting System (MSRS).
- Monitor R&D efforts to develop new technologies for marine mammal detection and avoidance in order to plan for possible acquisition of feasible technologies.
- Develop better measures of effectiveness for MPS enforcement efforts.
- Support Resource Proposals that address requirements for MPS activities.
- Allocate resources required to implement Ocean Steward in the annual Operational Guidance letter.
- Propose statutory changes and new regulations to improve CG ability to support the nation's MPS objectives.
- Consider seeking expanded authority for regulation of vessels in order to protect marine protected species.







### STRATEGY 3: PARTNER WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

#### DISCUSSION:

Our leadership should seek opportunities to help recover and maintain the nation's marine protected species (MPS) by working more closely with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Marine Sanctuaries (NMS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, industry, research institutions, and international organizations. We should partner with concerned agencies and organizations to ensure MPS issues are considered whenever agencies propose new regulations. We should work closely with NOAA, NMFS, the NMS, state and local governments, and international organizations to ensure we are doing all we can to provide enforcement for various marine protected areas, and to assist them with their education and outreach initiatives. We should reach out to other management agencies and research institutions to assist in providing the data needed to answer important questions about marine protected species.

#### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Maximize assistance to NMFS in investigation and prosecution of protected MPS incidents.
- Work closely with NMFS on MPS issues such as fishing gear conflicts, vessel traffic management, and by-catch reduction.
- Work closely with the Navy to monitor research and development efforts to use acoustics for tracking and avoiding endangered whales.

- Use Memorandums Of Understanding (MOU), as appropriate, to define relations with the National Marine Sanctuaries and other marine protected areas.
- Engage other agencies in a discussion of remote marine protected areas.
- Increase our role in federal and international recovery teams and task forces (e.g., the Coral Reef Task Force, the Manatee Recovery Team, and Right Whale Recovery Plan Implementation Teams).
- Emphasize ship-riding opportunities for NMFS and NMS personnel on CG fisheries/MPS patrols.
- Establish a senior officer liaison billet to NOAA to increase CG input and interaction in developing MPS issues and regulations.
- Establish a senior officer liaison billet to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).
- Create opportunities for graduate level marine affairs students to experience CG fisheries and MPS operations.
- Engage other agencies in joint rulemaking for MPS regulations.

### STRATEGY 4: PUBLICIZE OUR EFFORTS

#### DISCUSSION:

The Coast Guard already has many marine protected species success stories to tell. We are partnering with the USFWS to educate the boating public and reduce manatee deaths by enforcing speed zone regulations in Florida. We are working closely with NMFS and environmental agencies to help protect the highly endangered northern right whale. In Hawaii, we remove tons of derelict fishing nets from coral reefs that are critical habitat of the endangered Hawaiian monk seal. Conducting this work, however, is only half of the job. If the public is to perceive us as



stewards of the ocean, then we must highlight our efforts and successes to the press and the public at every opportunity. Local units need to let communities know what we are doing to protect their waters. Districts should emphasize the importance of our MPS mission in maintaining healthy, sustainable ecosystems. Area and Headquarters staffs must cultivate relationships with the press, civic leaders, stakeholders and legislators to ensure they are aware of the valuable work the Coast Guard is doing. The public must recognize we are the nation's most valuable maritime asset in the effort to protect and sustain our oceans and their resources. The more we are seen taking positive, decisive action and producing good results, the more the public will demand we be properly resourced to perform this vital mission.

- Raise the profile of the MPS mission to attract recruits with interest in environmental issues.



### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Maximize publicity of cooperative MPS efforts with federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- Maximize publicity of Sea Partners MPS initiatives.
- Use inspections and examinations as opportunities to provide MPS information packages to vessels.
- Use publicity to generate interest in, and develop ideas for, future marine environment cleanups and other initiatives.
- Optimize publicity of CG role in MPS task forces.
- Maximize publicity of CG Auxiliary public education efforts in MPS identification, sensitivity, and avoidance measures.
- Develop an interactive forum for public comment and ideas regarding MPS protection.

***Mission  
Awareness***

***Allocate  
Resources***



***Productive  
Partnerships***

***Publicize  
Efforts***