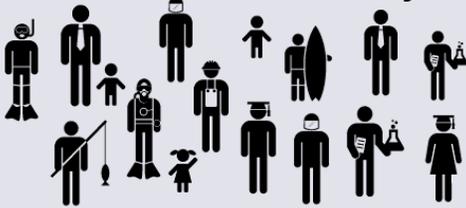


Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan Review

NOAA wants to hear from you



Management Plan Review is greatly enhanced by input from members of the public and stakeholder groups. NOAA is accepting public scoping comments Feb. 7 – April 10, 2020.

Online

Comments may be submitted electronically at <https://www.regulations.gov>

Enter the docket number NOAA–NOS–2020–0003 in the search box and click on "Comment Now!"

Mail

Attn: Management Plan Revision
NOAA Stellwagen Bank NMS
175 Edward Foster Road
Scituate, MA 02066

Email:

sbnmsmanagementplan@noaa.gov
Use subject line: COMMENT

Due to current public health concerns, in-person meetings have been canceled. In lieu of those meetings, one or more virtual (i.e. online) meetings will be scheduled. Details will be posted on the sanctuary website when available.

Just off the New England coastline, yet worlds apart, the magnificent waters of Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (SBNMS) encompass one of the most biologically and commercially productive areas in the Gulf of Maine. The underwater banks and features found there are key seasonal feeding grounds for species in the northwestern Atlantic, including the endangered North Atlantic right whale, seabirds, and bluefin tuna.

Public Input

NOAA is inviting the public to help chart the future management and direction of this special place. The sanctuary is updating its Management Plan, which prioritizes resource management issues and describes actions by NOAA and partners to address them. The plan encompasses all programming—research, education, outreach, volunteers, conservation, and enforcement—that protects the ecological and cultural

resources of the sanctuary while supporting responsible uses and enjoyment.

NOAA last updated the sanctuary's management plan in 2010. Over the last decade, sanctuary resources and environmental conditions have changed, creating new challenges and requirements for protecting resources and facilitating compatible human use. At the same time, new tools for effective management have emerged, driven by scientific advances, technological innovation, new partnerships, and other factors.

Management Plan Review

NOAA will seek public input throughout the 2-3 year Management Plan Review process. We hope that you attend public meetings and provide your input into the future of your sanctuary.



Photo: NOAA

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary protects a crucial habitat and feeding ground for several whale species, including humpback whales.



Map: NOAA

What happens next?

Public Scoping (Feb 7 – April 10, 2020)

This initial brainstorming and public comment period helps NOAA define the scope of issues that the management plan review will address. During this time, the public can raise issues and strategies for NOAA to consider in developing the new management plan. NOAA will also hold public scoping meetings to provide information about the review process and to accept both oral and written comments.

Issue Identification and Action Plan Development

After the public scoping period, sanctuary staff will review all

comments to identify and prioritize issues to be addressed in the new management plan. NOAA will seek input from the sanctuary advisory council and subject matter experts to help develop tailored action plans to address these issues. These discussions will form the foundation of a new draft management plan.

Draft Environmental Review and Draft Management Plan

NOAA will prepare a draft management plan and an accompanying environmental analysis of the activities proposed in the plan. If regulatory changes are necessary, NOAA will also develop a proposed rule.

Public Review and Comment

NOAA will hold additional meetings and ask the public to review and comment on the draft management plan. NOAA will then review comments and make any necessary changes.

Final Environmental Review and Management Plan

After considering public comments, NOAA will release a Final Management Plan, final environmental review document, and if needed, a Final Rule.

For more information, or to be added to the distribution list for management plan review updates and announcements, please email sbnmsmanagementplan@noaa.gov



Photo: Doug Costa/NOAA

An Atlantic lobster peers out of its protective hole on the seafloor.



Photo: Anne Smrcina/NOAA

The remotely operated vehicle *Hela* is lowered into the waters of the sanctuary.



Photo: Matthew Lawrence/NOAA

A school of Atlantic cod shelter beneath a colorful outcrop of marine invertebrates.