



Contact: Anne Smrcina
781-545-8026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 17, 2010

NOAA Releases New Management Plan for Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary

NOAA today released the final management plan for Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, which will guide the sanctuary's resource protection and conservation efforts over the next five years.

Based on several years of scientific study, and developed with extensive public input, the new management plan focuses on key issues affecting the sanctuary, including ecosystem alteration, wildlife disturbance, vessel traffic and its potential threat to marine mammals, water quality and invasive species. Many of these issues were not well understood or recognized when the original management plan was published in 1993.

The plan also addresses sanctuary programs such as maritime heritage preservation, conservation science, enforcement, interagency cooperation, public outreach and education, and infrastructure development.

"Many people from around the world have experienced Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary through whale watches and other recreational activities," said Craig MacDonald, the sanctuary's superintendent. "Others recognize the area's diverse marine life, its rich maritime history and economic significance. This plan provides a roadmap for what can be done to restore and protect the sanctuary's valuable resources for future generations."

In developing the new management plan, the sanctuary relied on data and expertise from NOAA's Fisheries Service, and worked in consultation with many local, state, federal and non-governmental entities.

The plan also is the product of an extensive public process begun in 2000 that resulted in more than 45,500 comments provided during the public scoping and draft management plan review periods. Periodic management plan review is required by Congress for each of the 13 national marine sanctuaries and one marine national monument administered under NOAA.

Copies of the management plan on CD may be requested by calling 781-545-8026 or via email at stellwagen@noaa.gov. The plan may also be downloaded from the sanctuary's website, <http://stellwagen.noaa.gov>.

Designated in 1992, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary encompasses 842 square miles of ocean, stretching between Cape Ann and Cape Cod. Renowned for its scenic beauty and remarkable productivity, the sanctuary supports a rich diversity of marine life including 22 species of marine mammals, more than 53 species of seabirds, more than 80 species of fishes, and hundreds of marine invertebrates.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.