

Editorial: Sanctuary's expansion would help region

April 20, 2012

The Alpena News

Given the track record Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary officials have demonstrated in Alpena, we support expanding the sanctuary's current boundaries as has been proposed to Congress.

We've advocated that position in the past, thus our stand shouldn't be a surprise for readers. Neither should readers have been surprised this week that at the first of three public hearings on the proposed expansion, there was strong support for the proposal.

Rogers City diver Steve Kroll summed up the situation well Tuesday, reciting the history of the sanctuary and the times when rumor versus fact created an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust across the region.

"It's been a bit difficult from the beginning, because divers were one of the ... obstacles to this whole thing because we were worried about being able to see the wrecks when we wanted to, didn't want to buy a permit, we didn't want government to come here, basically. Of course I think the policies that have been practiced very well for all these years have shown the diving group that's just not going to happen," he said. "Divers are indeed happy with the situation. In fact, they're elated with the situation. You have access not just to the wreck but you have sound history and research ... on the web page. It's just a fantastic way to explore wrecks 24/7, and I don't have to decompress while I'm doing it."

Simply put, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary is one of the best things to happen to our region in the past 20 years. Expansion of its boundaries can only be viewed as a win-win for all of us.