

## Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary's Management Plan Review

New challenges and opportunities emerge with time. For this reason, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act ([www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov/about/legislation/](http://www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov/about/legislation/)) requires periodic updating of sanctuary management plans to reevaluate site-specific goals and objectives and to develop management strategies and activities to ensure the sanctuary best protects its resources. Management plans are sanctuary-specific planning and management documents used by all national marine sanctuaries. They identify immediate, mid-range, and long-term challenges and opportunities, and develop a dedicated course for the future. A management plan describes resource protection, research, and education programs that guide sanctuary operations, specifies how a sanctuary should best protect its resources, and describes sanctuary regulations if appropriate.

The revised management plan will guide sanctuary programs and operations by setting budget and project priorities. The plan will also assist the advisory council in providing advice on management decisions and provide the public with a better understanding of the sanctuary's strategies to protect the resources of Thunder Bay. The plan also includes specific performance measures designed to assess the progress of the sanctuary in implementing this new management plan.

The original Thunder Bay NMS management plan was written as part of the sanctuary designation process and published in the Final Environmental Impact Statement ([www.thunderbay.noaa.gov/pdfs/ThunderBayEIS.pdf](http://www.thunderbay.noaa.gov/pdfs/ThunderBayEIS.pdf)). The new Thunder Bay NMS Draft Management Plan (DMP) and its contents are the result of the sanctuary's first management plan review since its designation in 2000. NOAA and the State of Michigan's HAL prepared the Draft Management Plan in cooperation with the advisory council and with input from the public, state and federal agencies, and other stakeholders.

The Thunder Bay NMS management plan review began in September 2006 with a series of public scoping meetings held in Alpena (9/24/06 and 9/26/06), Presque Isle County (9/25/06), Alcona County (9/28/06), and Lansing (9/29/06). The scoping meetings were used to gather input on resource management issues from resource users, interest groups, government agencies, and other members of the public. The sanctuary also received written comments via mail, fax, and email from September 18, 2006 to October 13, 2006. Approximately 100 comments were received from the public.

Public comments were used to identify issues to be addressed in the updated management plan. The advisory council established six working groups consisting of sanctuary staff, members of the advisory council, and members of the public to address the issues identified: boundaries, education and outreach, resource protection, funding, research, and sanctuary operations.

The working groups held 22 working group meetings to develop action plan strategies and activities. The boundary working group met first, and based on the density and historical, archaeological, and recreational value of resources, recommended that the

sanctuary be expanded to a 3,662-square-mile area encompassing Alpena, Alcona, and Presque Isle Counties to the international border with Canada. On May 22, 2007, the advisory council voted to accept a resolution to recommend expansion of the sanctuary boundary to the 3,662-square-mile area. Additionally, the advisory council voted to accept the funding working group's recommendation to develop a local foundation to provide additional support to the sanctuary.

The education and outreach, research, and resource protection working groups' recommendations for action plan strategies and activities were presented at the February 19, 2008 advisory council meeting and the advisory council voted unanimously to accept the recommendations. These included strategies for expanding sanctuary education and outreach programs, promoting the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center and Trail, further characterizing and monitoring sanctuary resources, and enhancing sanctuary resources protection programs.

The Draft Management Plan was developed by sanctuary staff with advice from advisory council working groups comprised of advisory council members and other members of the public. The core of this Draft Management Plan is four action plans: Resource Protection, Education and Outreach, Research, and Sanctuary Operations and Administration. Each action plan begins with background information on current sanctuary programs and an overview of the direction the sanctuary will take to address current management needs. The goals and objectives are also stated for each action plan.

Strategies describe how the goals will be accomplished for a particular issue or program area. Each strategy is divided into specific activities for sanctuary staff to complete. Action plan resource requirements are estimated based on the overall needs for conducting the strategies, including staff salaries. These estimates have been developed to represent the full requirements to conduct programs and projects, including outside funding, as described over a five-year period. Full implementation of these action plans is dependent on continued support from state and federal funding, grants, donations, and contributions from partners.

Performance measures for each action plan are identified to assist in evaluating the sanctuary's progress over time. As these measures are monitored, data is collected on progress towards the achievement of outcomes as delineated in the action plan. In areas where the sanctuary is falling short of targets, staff will work to identify the obstacles preventing Thunder Bay NMS from reaching targets. Results will be compiled, synthesized, and then reported by the site superintendent annually at an advisory council meeting.

The Draft Management Plan is being circulated to the public for written comment. Additionally, Draft Management Plan hearings are being held to gather further public comments and suggestions. The Final Management Plan will be composed of the Draft Management Plan with modifications made after analyzing the public comments. All comments will be considered and the sanctuary will provide a response to all comments upon release of the Final Management Plan. The Final Management Plan will become

the new planning document that guides sanctuary actions to ensure that the sanctuary emerges better able to protect and use its maritime heritage resources for the benefit of current and future generations.