

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



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United States Coast Guard

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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 21st 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", written over the printed name "JAMES M. 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

COMMANDANT'S PREAMBLE

The Coast Guard's Strategic Plan 1999 states the nation's waterways and their ecosystems are vital to our economy and health. This is why we made the protection of natural resources, specifically the elimination of environmental damage and natural resource degradation associated with maritime activities, one of our five strategic goals, and made enforcing the federal regulations that result in all living marine resources achieving healthy, sustainable populations one of our performance goals. We already have formal plans in place to help us achieve some of these goals, particularly in the areas of pollution response and fisheries law enforcement. However, if we are to fully achieve our protection of natural resources strategic goal, we must become more involved in the efforts to recover and maintain our nation's marine protected species and the habitats on which they depend.

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in public and governmental concern about the state of our oceans and their living resources. Evidence of this includes:

- Increasing fishery management measures designed to reduce bycatch of non-targeted species, such as turtle excluder devices (TEDs), fixed-net pingers, and bycatch reduction devices (BRDs).
- Rising conflicts between advocates for species protection and resource users, such as those existing between Steller sea lion protection advocates and Bering Sea/Gulf of Alaska pollock fishers, and between northern right whale protection advocates and New England fixed gear fishers.
- The recent formation of federal and state government task forces to protect coral reefs, northern right whales, Pacific salmon, and other endangered species.
- National Marine Fisheries Service Report to Congress (1999) concluding, of the 230 stocks for which the status can be determined, 98 are overfished and five are approaching overfished - an increase from 86 overfished stocks in 1997 and 90 in 1998.
- Fisheries closures and restrictions in the Gulf of Maine and the West Coast that have had a devastating economic impact on groundfish fleets.
- Increasing litigation against government agencies (including the Coast Guard) by organizations trying to influence marine resource management policy.
- Funding for the Lands Legacy Initiative, which included \$27 million to protect ocean and coastal resources in FY 2000 and a request for \$266 million for FY 2001.
- The recent signing, by President Clinton, of Executive Order 13158, strengthening and expanding the nation's system of marine protected areas (MPAs).

The Coast Guard already has effective, coordinated strategies for enforcing our nation's fisheries management regulations, protecting the marine environment from oil pollution, and responding to maritime disasters. However, our approach to marine protected species (MPS), specifically those species and geographic areas that are protected under the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, or similar regulations or executive orders, is less clearly defined. Problems resulting from this include:

- Initial delay in establishing a coordinated plan for accomplishing assigned Atlantic Protected Living Marine Resources Initiative (APLMRI) tasks.

- Difficulty in addressing potential conflicts between high-speed craft and marine protected species in New England.
- Low funding priority for funding assessments to address the impact Coast Guard operations have on marine protected species throughout the Pacific Area.
- Inconsistency in handling cross-directorate MPS issues such as working with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on marine mammal protection initiatives and responding to the Coral Reef Initiative (Executive Order 13089).
- Working level frustration with lack of guidance for dealing with endangered species lawsuits, creation of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with NMFS, potential regulation of high-speed craft and whale watch industry vessels, and other MPS issues.

A robust ocean environment is essential to our nation's prosperity, and healthy populations of marine protected species are essential to maintaining a robust ocean environment. Just as protecting our water and air became top national priorities during the last decades of the 20th century, protecting our oceans is becoming a top priority of the 21st century. In the coming years, the nation will look for leaders to exercise responsible stewardship of our ocean resources. The Coast Guard is stepping forward and embracing this role, it is one of the most important roles we will ever undertake.

OCEAN STEWARD 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.

COAST GUARD STRATEGIC GOAL: PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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 VISION STATEMENT

The Coast Guard will be a leader in the effort to recover and maintain our nation's marine protected species

OCEAN STEWARD 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 PRINCIPLE

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, 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 AORs, 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 STRATEGIES

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.

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.

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.

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.

Each of these strategies contains sets of near, mid, and long-term objectives. Near-term objectives are those that can be achieved without a major reallocation of resources. Mid-term objectives require addition resources or a significant reallocation of resources. Long-term objectives are those objectives that will require institutional changes such as seeking additional authorities or creation of program offices.

STRATEGY: RAISE THE PROFILE OF THE MPS MISSION

1. 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 counterdrug 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.

2. KEY OBJECTIVES

a. Near Term

1) Incorporate MPS issues into CG performance planning.	G-CCS
2) Develop Area and District MPS operating and enforcement guidance.	G-O/Areas/ Districts
3) Emphasize area specific MPS issues in the curriculum of all 5 Regional Fisheries Training Centers (RFTC).	G-O/G-W/ Areas/RFTCs
4) Identify ways to increase CG Auxiliary participation in MPS mission.	G-O
5) Identify ways to increase focus on MPS issues in Sea Partners program.	G-M
6) Measure the effectiveness of current MPS initiatives such as compliance with the Mandatory Ship Reporting System (MSR) and manatee speed zone regulations.	G-O
7) Designate MPS points of contact (POC) at HQ/Areas/Districts, and create a CG network for information flow on MPS issues.	G-O/Areas/ Districts

b. Mid Term

1) Increase Endangered Species Act/Marine Mammal Protection Act enforcement pulse ops during critical seasons.	G-O/Areas/ Districts
2) 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.	G-O
3) Increase CG participation in environmental cleanup events such as the Center for Marine Conservation's annual International Coastal Clean Up.	G-M/G-O
4) 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).	G-W
5) Incorporate MPS issues into International Maritime Officers Course and Mobile Training Teams.	G-CI
6) Designate MPS POC at appropriate CG units.	Districts
7) Include MPS guidance in Maritime Law Enforcement Manual updates.	G-O
8) Include MPS guidance in Marine Safety Manual updates.	G-M

c. Long Term

1) Create HQ cross-directorate MPS office.	G-M/G-O
2) Incorporate MPS questions into Servicewide Examinations.	G-W
3) Add MPS material to appropriate A School curricula (e.g., BM, QM, and MST).	G-W
4) Add MPS material to appropriate C School curricula (e.g., Boarding Officer Course, Boarding Team Member Course, and Marine Safety Petty Officer Course).	G-W

STRATEGY: OBTAIN NECESSARY RESOURCES AND AUTHORITIES

1. 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 should 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 should 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.

2. KEY OBJECTIVES

a. Near Term

1) Request funding for implementation of Ocean Steward through annual budgeting and resource allocation processes.	G-I/G-M/ G-O/G-
2) Include resource hour requests for implementation of Ocean Steward in input to the annual Operational Guidance letter.	G-O/Areas
3) Assess the need for more enforcement authority to protect resources of various marine protected areas and sanctuaries.	G-L/G-M/ G-O
4) Monitor and evaluate effectiveness of the Mandatory Ship Reporting System (MSR).	G-M/G-O
5) Monitor R&D efforts to develop new technologies for marine mammal detection and avoidance in order to plan for possible acquisition of feasible technologies.	G-O/G-S

b. Mid Term

1) Develop better measures of effectiveness for MPS enforcement efforts.	G-O
2) Support Resource Proposals that address requirements for MPS activities.	G-CCS
3) Allocate resources required to implement Ocean Steward in the annual Operational Guidance letter.	G-O
4) Propose statutory changes and new regulations to improve CG ability to support the nation's MPS objectives.	G-L/G-M/ G-O

c. Long term

1) Consider seeking expanded authority for regulation of vessels in order to protect marine protected species.	G-L/G-M/ G-O
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STRATEGY: PARTNER WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. 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.

2. KEY OBJECTIVES

a. Near Term

1) Maximize assistance to NMFS in investigation and prosecution of protected MPS incidents.	G-O
2) Work closely with NMFS on MPS issues such as fishing gear conflicts, vessel traffic management, and bycatch reduction.	G-M/G-O
3) Work closely with the Navy to monitor research and development efforts to use acoustics for tracking and avoiding endangered whales.	G-O/G-C
4) Use MOUs, as appropriate, to define relations with the National Marine Sanctuaries and other marine protected areas.	G-L/G-M/ G-O
5) Engage other agencies in a discussion of remote marine protected areas.	G-M/G-O
6) 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).	G-M/G-O
7) Emphasize ship-riding opportunities for NMFS and NMS personnel on CG fisheries/MPS patrols.	G-O

b. Mid Term

1) Establish a senior officer liaison billet to NOAA to increase CG input and interaction in developing MPS issues and regulations.	G-M/G-O
2) Establish a senior officer liaison billet to Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).	G-M/G-O
3) Create opportunities for undergraduate/graduate level marine affairs students to experience CG fisheries and MPS operations.	G-O

c. Long term

1) Consider engaging other agencies in joint rulemaking for MPS regulations.	G-L/G-M
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STRATEGY: PUBLICIZE OUR EFFORTS

1. 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.

2. KEY OBJECTIVES

a. Near Term

1) Maximize publicity of cooperative MPS efforts with federal and state agencies and non-governmental organizations.	G-I/G-L/ G-M/G-O
2) Maximize publicity of Sea Partners MPS initiatives.	G-I/G-M
3) Use inspections and examinations as opportunities to provide MPS information packages to vessels.	G-M/G-O

b. Mid Term

1) Use publicity to generate interest in, and develop ideas for, future marine environment cleanups and other initiatives.	G-I
2) Optimize publicity of CG role in MPS task forces.	G-I
3) Maximize publicity of CG Auxiliary public education efforts in MPS identification, sensitivity, and avoidance measures.	G-I/G-O

c. Long term

1) Develop an interactive forum for public comment and ideas regarding MPS protection.	G-I
2) Raise the profile of the MPS mission to attract recruits with interest in environmental issues.	G-W