

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 - 2024



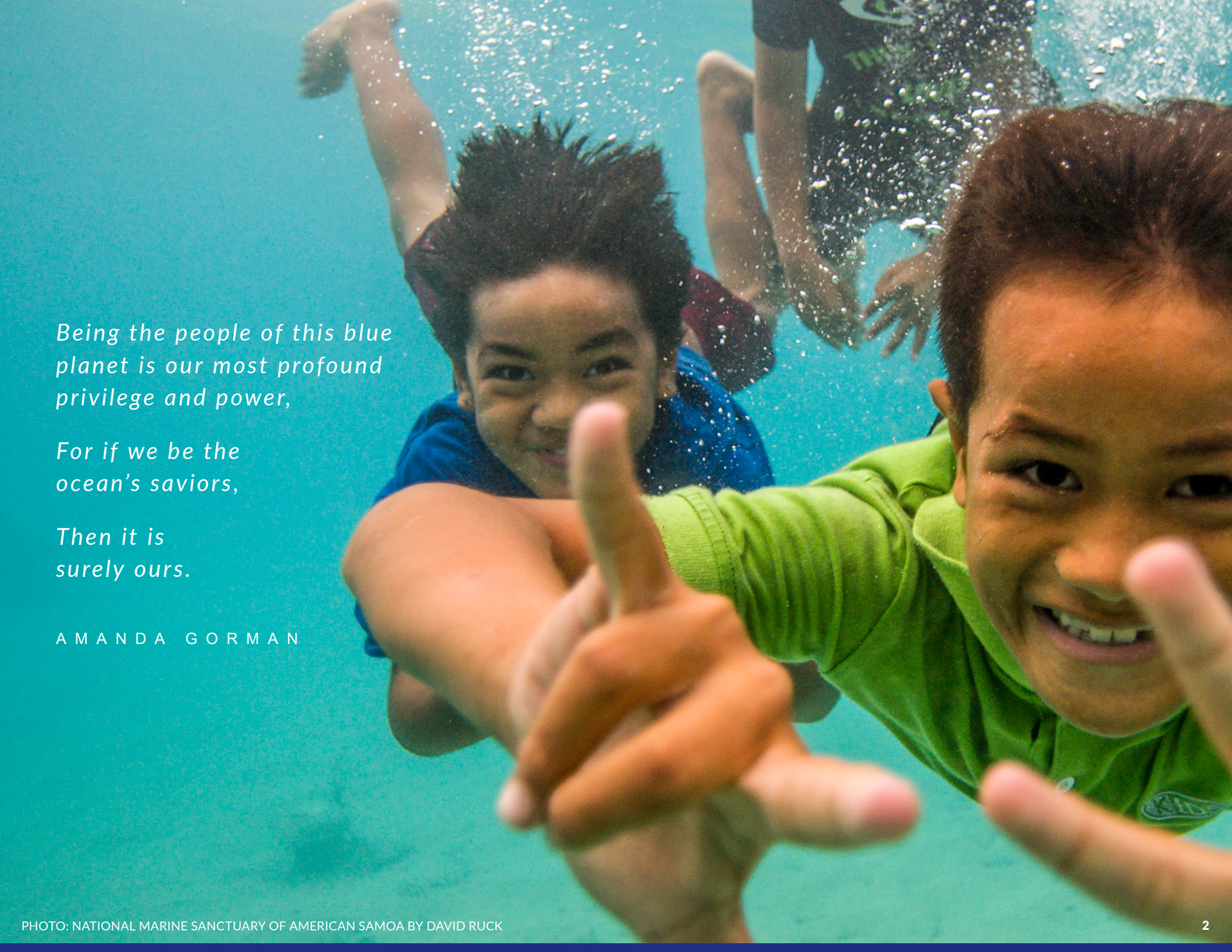
National
Marine Sanctuary
Foundation



About us

The National Marine Sanctuary Foundation is a leading voice for U.S. protected waters.

We work in partnership with communities and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conserve treasured places for a healthy ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes, and for people, who rely on them.

An underwater photograph of several children swimming in clear, turquoise water. In the foreground, a young boy in a bright green shirt is smiling broadly and pointing his right index finger directly at the camera. To his left, another child in a blue shirt is also smiling and looking towards the camera. In the background, other children are visible, some with their arms raised, creating a sense of joyful movement. Bubbles are scattered throughout the water, adding to the dynamic feel of the scene.

*Being the people of this blue
planet is our most profound
privilege and power,*

*For if we be the
ocean's saviors,*

*Then it is
surely ours.*

A M A N D A G O R M A N

The waters that sustain us

We live on a water planet and all that it brings to life. The ocean and Great Lakes sustain us, whether we live on the coast or in the heartland.

A healthy ocean and Great Lakes are essential to addressing the challenges we face. To address climate change, we need biodiversity. To feed the growing population on Earth, we need to provide fish, shellfish, and seaweeds. To power our communities, we need space for renewable energy. The potential of the ocean and Great Lakes to meet our needs is tremendous if we are good stewards and help them thrive.

Air

The ocean produces over half of the world's oxygen.

Food

The ocean provides more than just seafood; ingredients from the sea are found in peanut butter, soymilk, toothpaste and other products.

Water

The ocean is crucial to water on Earth: all streams and rivers flow to the sea, and as water evaporates, the ocean gives rise to life-sustaining rain and freshwater. The Great Lakes hold 20 percent of the world's freshwater supply.

Weather

Covering 70 percent of the Earth's surface, the ocean transports heat from the equator to the poles, regulating our climate and weather patterns.

Climate

The ocean, its ecosystems and species absorb 50 times more carbon dioxide than our atmosphere and coast habitat provides critical natural infrastructure to protect communities from storms.

Economy

America's marine economy contributed about \$397 billion to the nation's gross domestic product in 2019. The health of our ocean and Great Lakes underpins key sectors of our economy and enhances the quality of life for communities.

Biodiversity

The ocean hosts 80 percent of the Earth's biodiversity, providing vital ecosystems services.

Recreation

From fishing to boating and whale watching, the ocean and Great Lakes provides us with many unique activities for recreation.

Threats to our ocean and Great Lakes



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

Ocean acidification, sea-level rise and warming water temperatures are the fastest-growing and most pronounced threat to our ocean.



The ocean absorbs **MORE THAN 90 PERCENT** of excess heat energy. The rate of ocean warming **MORE THAN DOUBLED** since 1993.



The pH of the ocean's surface waters is **DECREASING**. Since pre-industrial times, **OCEAN ACIDITY INCREASED APPROXIMATELY 30 PERCENT**.



8+ MILLION TONS OF PLASTIC

end up in the ocean **EVERY YEAR**, and plastic is found in the **MOST REMOTE AREAS** explored.



BIODIVERSITY LOSS

60 PERCENT of the world's major marine ecosystems that **UNDERPIN LIVELIHOODS** have been degraded or are being used unsustainably.



LIVE CORAL COVER

on reefs is nearly half of the area it was in the 1870s, with the rate of decline accelerating over the past 20–30 years.



SEAGRASS

decreased by over 10 percent per decade from 1970 to 2000. Global coverage of mangroves declined by roughly 40 percent.



SALTMARSH

coverage declined an estimated 60 percent.




The deep sea

is also facing **HUMAN IMPACTS** which are increasing rapidly.



POLLUTION

is second only to climate change in terms of cumulative impact on marine ecosystem health. Pollution results in **POOR WATER QUALITY** which degrades ecosystems and exposes nearby communities to health risks from contaminated fish and toxins.

A photograph of two children fishing on a rocky shore. The child on the left is wearing a dark hoodie and green shorts, holding a fishing rod. The child on the right is wearing a red shirt and colorful shorts. They are standing on dark, jagged rocks in the ocean. The sky is blue with some clouds, and the water is dark blue with white foam from the waves.

*Now is the time to develop
a system of protected areas in
our ocean and Great Lakes that
represents diverse ecosystems,
protects our cultural heritage
and protects biodiversity
and its contributions to people.
We must manage our ocean and
Great Lakes for the benefit
of current and future
generations, including providing
equitable access to nature
and tackling climate change.*



Value of marine protected areas

National marine sanctuaries, like our national parks, conserve rare, threatened and endangered species and extraordinary seascapes.

Since the creation of the first sanctuary in 1975, the United States has protected these treasured places for their natural beauty, ecological importance, and cultural significance, while allowing people to use and enjoy them. The waters of the National Marine Sanctuary System encompass living organisms, the ocean and its currents, and the seafloor itself—which may be as flat as a prairie, carved into ravines deeper than the Grand Canyon, or pierced by mountain peaks taller than Mount Everest. They serve as outdoor classrooms for school and university students and living laboratories for marine scientists. They support recreation, fishing and shellfishing, and tourism. They are places where people come to spend time with families and friends and to fish, swim, dive, photograph, wade, explore, and enjoy the wonder of the natural world.

Value of marine protected areas cont.

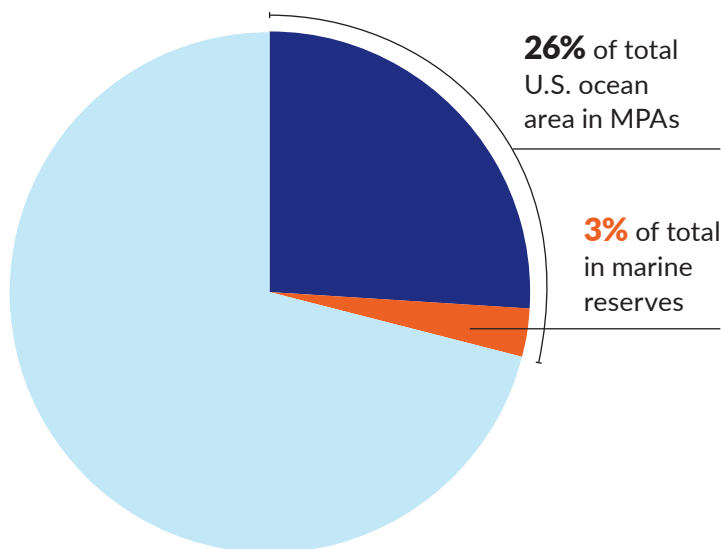
U.S. ocean waters cover 4.5 million sq. miles and span from the icy cold gray waters of the Arctic to the warm tropical blue waters of the Caribbean Sea. The Great Lakes cover over 94,000 sq. miles, accounting for more than 20 percent of the world's surface freshwater. The actions that the U.S. takes to protect our ocean and Great Lakes has global impacts.

Today, **marine protected areas (MPAs) cover 1.2 million sq. miles or 26% of U.S. waters.** Marine reserves, a specific type of MPA, are rare in the United States, with **just over 3% of U.S. waters are in protected in areas that prohibit removing or destroying natural or cultural resources.** The remaining 23% of protected marine area is managed for multiple uses and priorities, including commercial and recreational fishing, scientific research, and wildlife and habitat protection.

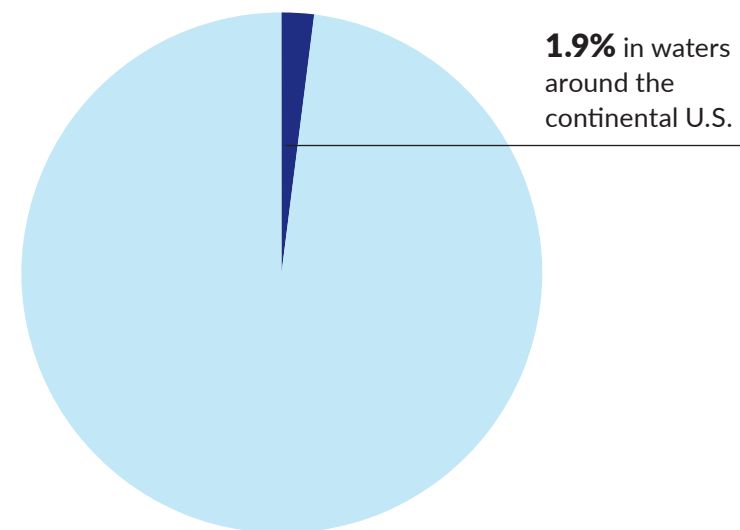
The **vast majority of U.S. protected ocean is within the central Pacific where over 1.1 million sq. miles** are held in trust for current and future generations. **Outside of the center Pacific, only 1.9% of the U.S. ocean is in MPAs.**

A well-managed, connected system of marine protected areas – national marine sanctuaries, marine national monuments, national parks, national wildlife refuges, and their state, local, and tribal equivalents – will make our ocean and Great Lakes more resilient to climate change.

TOTAL U.S. OCEAN WATERS



TOTAL U.S. OCEAN WATERS IN MPAs



Long-term goals of the Foundation

- **Protect**

Work collaboratively to develop a system of marine and Great Lakes protected areas that represent diverse ecosystems, safeguard our shared history, and protect biodiversity and its contributions to nature for all.

- **Build resilience**

Build programs that restore habitat, recover species, and improve water quality to make our ocean and Great Lakes more resilient to climate change.

- **Invest in nature**

Work with the private and public sectors to develop innovative financing tools for active restoration and carbon sequestration.

- **Collaborate**

Embrace and cultivate partnerships that build networks for the work ahead.

- **Partner**

Remain a trust partner to NOAA and local and Federal agencies that support our work.



Strategic priorities 2022-2024

- Work with communities across the United States and around the globe to conserve the rich diversity of life and habitat in our ocean and Great Lakes on which all humanity depends.
- Inspire a proud community of stewards dedicated to working together and helping our ocean and Great Lakes thrive for future generations.
- Expand our understanding of the blue planet through exploration, incorporating Indigenous knowledge and wisdom into our work, and by fostering a new generation of scientists and explorers.



Our work is to connect people to their ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes through our national marine sanctuaries and monuments. We cannot achieve that mission unless we invite everyone to join us. Through our programs and within our organization, we will pursue a **collaborative and inclusive approach that engages diverse communities in conservation** and protection of our shared heritage.





Our ocean and Great Lakes and the communities that depend on them cannot thrive without tackling climate change and its impacts. Working with our partners, the Foundation will make **addressing climate change and building climate resilience an integral part of all of our programs** and science will continue to underpin our work.

Mission area 1

Conserve the rich diversity of marine wildlife and habitat for current and future generations.

Goal 1

Increase the size of the National Marine Sanctuary System and enhance biodiversity conservation and maritime heritage and cultural preservation.

How we will do it

1. Identify gaps in marine biodiversity and cultural resource protection and advocate for the expansion of the National Marine Sanctuary System.
2. Increase public and private funding for marine and Great Lakes conservation
3. Strengthen public policy support for protected waters.
4. Support the priorities of Indigenous communities and locally-led conservation efforts.

Goal 2

Restore habitat and recover species to enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems and support coastal communities.

How we will do it

1. Increase restoration of imperiled coral ecosystems and protect healthy ones.
2. Advance efforts to restore kelp forest along the California Coast.
3. Develop innovative projects that engage diverse communities and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and wisdom into the protection and restoration of habitat and the recovery of species, specifically focused on national marine sanctuaries, marine national monuments and other areas that impact the National Marine Sanctuary System's resources.
4. Reduce mortality of large whales by improving national efforts to respond to and rescue entangled whales, supporting research to identify whale use areas and reduce co-occurrence with fishing activity, vessel traffic and other threats, and actively test and supports new gear innovations that reduce the risk of entanglements.

Goal 3

Work with community partners to improve water quality and reduce pollution in national sanctuaries, including removing underwater marine debris.

How we will do it

1. Expand and strengthen efforts to prevent and remove marine debris from our ocean and Great Lakes.
2. Advance federal, state, and private partnerships to protect watersheds and prevent pollution that impacts national marine sanctuary resources.



Mission area 2

Inspire a proud community of stewards for our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Goal 1

Create stewards for marine protected areas.

How we will do it

1. Engage travel and tourism operators and professionals working in communities around national marine sanctuaries, marine national monuments, and other protected waters in the conservation of these areas.
2. Engage zoos, aquariums, and museums as key partners to build programming to support U.S. protected waters.
3. Create inclusive interpretive exhibits and educational materials that engage more diverse audiences with the natural, cultural, and maritime heritage resources of national marine sanctuaries.
4. Enhance cultural, archaeological, and historical connections to protected waters through public outreach and supporting collaborations among stakeholders to engage in building networks and sharing ideas.
5. Collaborate with corporate partners to improve the health of our ocean and Great Lakes by restoring habitats, recovering species, supporting education, and addressing climate change.

Goal 2

Inspire the next generation of leaders in ocean science and conservation.

How we will do it

1. Expand partnerships with STEM partners to support marine science education.
2. Build the capacity of educators to incorporate ocean science and conservation content into their teaching and inspire the next generation of ocean explorers, stewards, scientists, communicators, and marine protected area managers.
3. Provide service-learning and hands-on outdoor experiences that spur engagement in conservation.
4. Provide funding to expand outreach into diverse communities.

Goal 3

Build awareness of national marine sanctuaries.

How we will do it

1. Communicate the impact of national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments to the health of our planet and the people that rely on them.
2. Create new stewards and increase the number of sanctuary supporters through compelling and engaging content in digital and social media.



Mission area 3

Expand our understanding of the Blue Planet.

Goal 1

Increase our knowledge of the marine environment through exploration.

How we will do it

1. Support mapping and monitoring expeditions of U.S. waters and engage the public in these missions by creating learning and interpretation opportunities.
2. Foster private-public partnerships that use new technologies for exploration and management.
3. Advance early career development opportunities for students to enter the marine sciences and technologies workforce.
4. Incorporate Indigenous knowledge and wisdom into programs.

Goal 2

Increase understanding and use of sanctuaries as listening posts into ocean health and living laboratories and incubators for ocean solutions.

How we will do it

1. Encourage NOAA and academic and corporate partners to invest in research in national marine sanctuaries.
2. Test new technologies and methodologies in national marine sanctuaries and monuments.
3. Support social science research and valuation studies that increase our understanding of how sanctuaries contribute to communities and the Nation.
4. Determine the benefits of blue carbon ecosystems and species in sanctuaries.
5. Work with NOAA to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and wisdom into science and management of national marine sanctuaries.



Mission area 4

Build a strong organization and network to support protected areas in our ocean and Great Lakes.

Goal 1

Create a shared vision and principles for our work as one Foundation.

How we will do it

1. Develop a shared vision and principles for how the Foundation will meet its mission.
2. Align chapters, national staff, and trustees to achieve individual sanctuaries' and national priorities.
3. Strengthen communications to spur collaboration across the Foundation.
4. Annually, create impact reports that reflect the value of the Foundation.

Goal 2

Build an organization based on diversity, equity, and belonging, and shared leadership of the mission.

How we will do it

1. Complete a job classification and compensation review to ensure the Foundation workforce is meeting the capacity needs of the organization and increases transparency.
2. Institute an annual review of job descriptions and performance review that includes professional development goals for the year, and opportunities for staff to foster skill, expertise, and leadership development.
3. Complete diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging training for all interested Foundation staff and make an ongoing effort.
4. Develop cooperatively with our staff and board, a plan for the Foundation's Diversity, Equity, and Belong work and identify actions for the Foundation to implement our policy effectively.

Goal 3

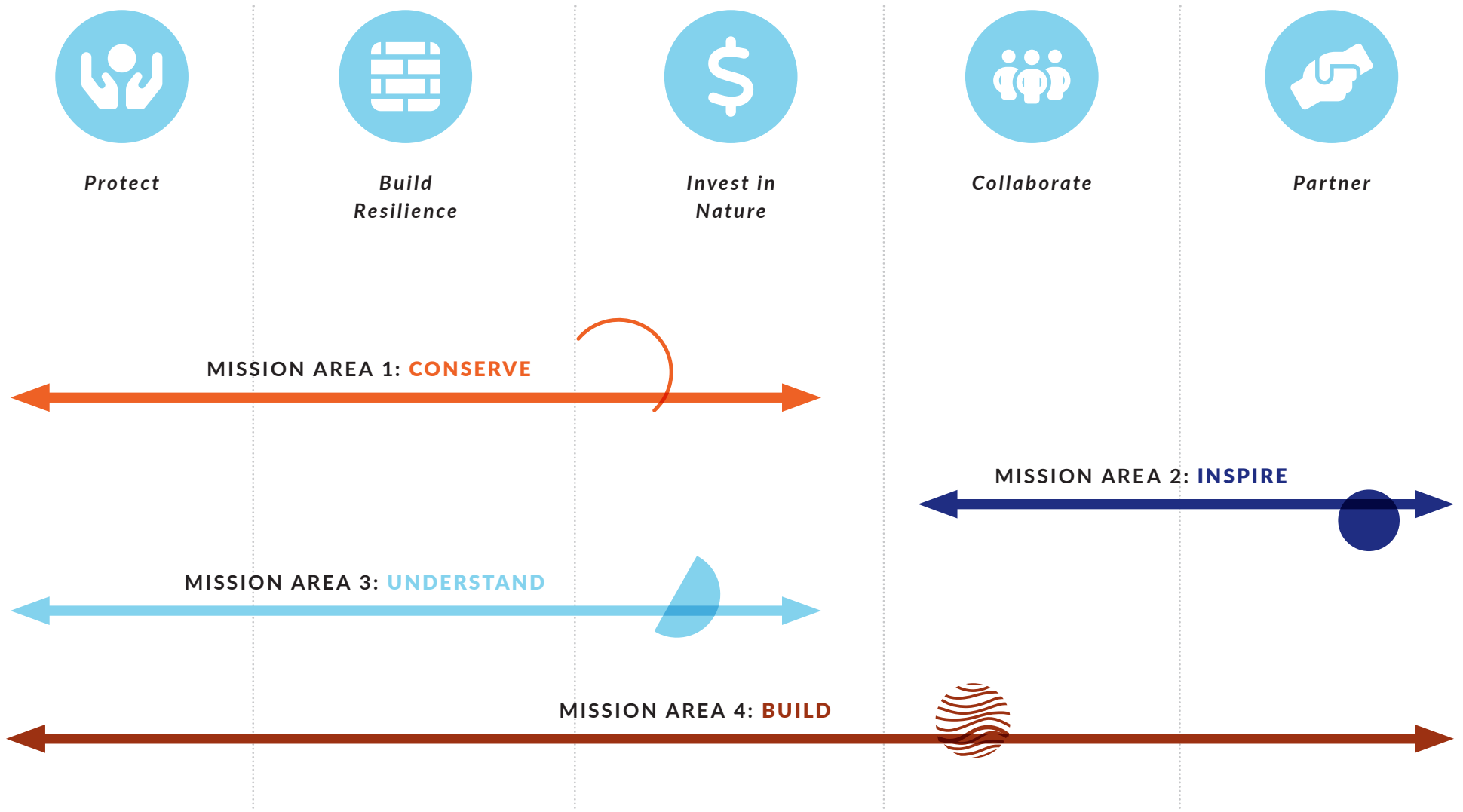
Cultivate partnerships that broaden stewardship of our waters.

How we will do it

1. Cultivate partnerships to increase corporate and philanthropic giving for programs at national marine sanctuaries and marine national monuments.
2. Invest in projects with lasting and measurable benefits to our ocean and Great Lakes
3. Identify innovative financing mechanisms for restoration and species recovery that help the National Marine Sanctuary System meet future challenges and create solutions.
4. Demonstrate the value and impact of the Foundation in fostering multi-agency, public-private partnership.



Alignment of mission areas to the Foundation's long-term goals



Glossary

Biodiversity: The species number, variety, and essential interdependence of all living things, including the number and variety of living organisms, the genetic differences among them, the communities, and ecosystems in which they occur, and the ecological and evolutionary processes that keep them functioning. *(Source: MPA Center)*

Climate Change: The long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas.

(Source: United Nations)

Cultural Landscape: A geographic area (including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein), associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. *(Source: MPA Center)*

Cultural Resources: Cultural resources are tangible entities at least 50 years in age that reflect the nation's maritime history and traditional cultural connections to the sea, such as archaeological sites, historic structures, shipwrecks, artifacts, and traditional cultural properties. *(Source: MPA Center)*

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging: "Diversity is having a seat at the table. Inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard."

(Source: Healing Equity United website)

Marine National Monument: An ocean area designated by a presidential proclamation under the Antiquities Act.

(Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

Marine Protected Area (MPA): Any area of the marine environment reserved by federal, state, territorial, tribal, or local laws or regulations to provide lasting protection for part or all the natural and cultural resources therein. *(Source: MPA Center)*

Marine Reserve: A type of MPA where extractive uses are prohibited (also referred to as "no-take" reserve).

(Source: MPA Center)

Marine Resources: Any biological or physical component of the marine environment that contributes to the structure, function, or services provided by a marine ecosystem.

National Marine Sanctuary: Multiple-use marine protected areas, protected under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, that may include breeding and feeding grounds of whales, sea lions, sharks, and sea turtles; significant coral reefs and kelp forest habitats; and the remains of historic shipwrecks. Some sanctuaries are zoned to include no-take areas.

(Source: MPA Center)

Watershed: A region or area connected by a body of water, rivers and drainage.



The National Marine Sanctuary System spans more than 620,000 square miles across the waters of the United States, from the South Pacific to the North Atlantic. Sanctuaries provide habitat for endangered, threatened, and rare species; preserve historic shipwrecks; and protect sacred cultural seascapes. They are frontiers for education and research, serving as outdoor classrooms for students of all ages to enjoy tide pools and trails of sunken vessels. They are living laboratories for scientists to understand and better protect marine environments. And they offer opportunities for visitors to dive through kelp forests, surf along scenic coastlines, and observe extraordinary sea life, from otters to orcas. The Foundation works in partnership with NOAA to support on-the-water conservation projects, education and public outreach, and research to help conserve our waters, for the good of the world and everything in it.



Foundation Chapters



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