



St. George Unangan Heritage National Marine Sanctuary Nomination

PUBLICATION



**Nov. 17,
2021**

NOAA opens public comment period on the 5-year review for the St. George Unangan Heritage National Marine Sanctuary nomination.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is invited to submit comments to the agency.

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www.regulations.gov,
using docket
NOAA-NOS-2021-0094

ENDS

**Dec. 17,
2021**

NEXT STEPS

FINAL DECISION

While conducting its review, sanctuary staff will consider all public comments in making a recommendation to the director to maintain or remove a nomination in the inventory. If the director decides to maintain a nomination in the inventory, this does not guarantee designation status.



About the Nomination

The St. George Unangan Heritage National Marine Sanctuary nomination was submitted by the city of St. George, Alaska on October 1, 2016, and added to the inventory of successful nominations on January 27, 2017.

St. George Island, one of the Pribilof Islands, is located approximately 300 miles west of the Alaskan mainland and 250 miles north of the Aleutian chain. The St. George Unangan Heritage area nomination encompasses a substantial portion of what is known as the Pribilof Domain, a biologically rich area at the heart of the Bering Sea.

The nomination seeks to protect this biologically rich area of the marine environment, as well as the culture and history of the Unangan people of St. George Island, who depend on a healthy ecosystem. The nomination boundary area extends seaward 30 miles around the island of St. George, except to the north, where it would only extend 20 miles.

More information on the nomination and 5-year review process, including how to submit comments, is available on the [website](#).



St. George Island and St. Paul Island are the two inhabited Pribilof islands, which lie in the central Bering Sea. Image: NOAA

NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY SYSTEM



5-Year Review Process

In 2014, NOAA issued a final rule establishing the sanctuary nomination process, allowing communities to nominate areas of the marine environment and Great Lakes for consideration as a national marine sanctuary.

Pursuant to this process, the city of St. George, Alaska nominated St. George Unangan Heritage National Marine Sanctuary in October of 2016.

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries staff reviewed the nomination

considering the 11 national significance criteria and management considerations when accepting it to the national inventory. The 5-year review focuses on these same criteria.

NOAA is not proposing to designate the St. George Unangan Heritage National Marine Sanctuary with this action. Instead, NOAA is seeking public comment on the 5-year review of the nomination for the proposed sanctuary.

Written comments should address the continued relevance of the nomination towards the 11 criteria, and any new information NOAA should consider about the nomination or the resources proposed for protection.

Comments should not focus at this time on whether NOAA should initiate the designation process for the sanctuary. The [11 Sanctuary Nomination Process criteria](#) are available in great detail on the website.



Northern fur seals at Staraya Artil rookery, St. George, Alaska can be seen through a drizzling mist. Photo: NOAA



Perhaps the last sealing plant in the world is located on St. George Island. Photo: NOAA



A November sunset lights up the city of St. George, Alaska. Photo: NOAA