

Eubalaena-Oculina National Marine Sanctuary Nomination

SECTION I - BASICS

Nomination Title: *Eubalaena-Oculina* National Marine Sanctuary

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SECTION II - INTRODUCTION

Narrative Description: Overview - The northeast coast of Florida nurtures remarkable biological, historical, and cultural resources which serve as an important economic stimulus for fisheries, tourism, research, education, and recreation. This area encompasses a portion of federally-designated critical habitat for the critically-endangered North Atlantic Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*), including a significant part of its only known calving grounds. The offshore realm includes spectacular deepwater banks of Ivory Tree Coral (*Oculina varicosa*) that support important fishery stocks and habitats, including spawning areas for reef fishes.¹ These delicate coral reefs also provide habitat for at least 350 invertebrate species.

In addition to *Eubalaena* and *Oculina* found off of northeast Florida, the beaches and continental shelf of northeast Florida include a considerable portion of the newly-designated critical habitat for the threatened Loggerhead Sea Turtle; and habitat for the endangered Leatherback, Kemp's Ridley, and Atlantic Green Sea Turtles. Hard-bottom ("live-bottom") reefs on the continental shelf and shelf-edge support significant populations of reef fishes, including such rare species as Warsaw Grouper and Speckled Hind. The area contains well-documented spawning grounds for these and other economically- and ecologically-valuable fish species.¹

The Indian River Lagoon system, adjacent to the proposed Sanctuary, is particularly high in diversity because of tropical influences; and the Gulf Stream along the proposed Sanctuary's outer boundary brings warm tropical water and dispersal stages (seeds, larvae) of tropical organisms northward into the region. This region also includes the northernmost extent for many tropical species (e.g., mangroves, fishes), as well as the southern range extent for many northern species. The Indian River Lagoon, Matanzas River, and other estuaries adjacent to the nomination area are important nursery areas for many marine fishes that spend their adult lives offshore in the proposed Sanctuary. Indeed, many of these estuarine habitats are already protected by the National Estuarine Research Reserves (Guana Tolomato Matanzas NERR); National Wildlife Refuges and Seashores (e.g., Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Canaveral National Seashore, Fort Matanzas National Monument); and state conservation zones (e.g., the Banana River Aquatic Preserve, Turnbull Hammock Conservation Area, Mosquito Lagoon Aquatic Preserve, Tomoka Marsh Aquatic Preserve, Bulow Creek State Park, Graham Swamp Conservation Area, Faver-Dykes State Park, Matanzas State Forest, Anastasia State Park, and Fort George Island Cultural State Park).

In addition to its diverse habitats, organisms, and economically valuable natural resources, the nominated area includes two important places: St. Augustine, the nation's oldest city and port; and Cape Canaveral, home to the lost French fleet of Jean Ribault and NASA's Kennedy Space Center. The history of these places tells the story of the birth and scientific achievements of our nation. Because of the number of French, Spanish and English colonial shipwrecks in the coastal waters, the region is a nationally significant archeological and maritime historical archive and a resource for study and education about our nation's founding.

Goals Description: Why this Nomination? - The National Marine Sanctuaries Act protects nationally significant places and, in particular, addresses the need for long-term protection of marine ecosystems and cultural resources. The Act provides protection for all habitats, organisms and resources, particularly those that cannot be effectively protected by other authorities, from human influences that include petroleum exploration and production. While local and state agencies may have overlapping jurisdictions with each other and with a National Marine Sanctuary, their regulations and management authorities are often aimed at protecting specific marine resources rather than ecosystems and cultural landscapes. No other federal agency is directly mandated to comprehensively conserve and manage special ocean areas and their component species and resources like the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The nominated area and the nation would benefit from conservation and management programs of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

We believe that a National Marine Sanctuary designation would maintain and enhance the critically-endangered population of the North Atlantic Right Whale; preserve and sustain important fisheries habitat and populations, including the *Oculina* and live-bottom reefs; and insure that significant maritime archeological material is managed and protected. At the same time, a National Marine Sanctuary would reinforce and publicize the national significance of these important natural and cultural resources. Additional protection afforded by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act is particularly urgent in light of planned petroleum exploration and production, increasing coastal development, continued decline of marine habitats and cultural resources, climate change and ocean acidification. Finally, a designation would identify the nominated area as one of national significance and great biological importance, worthy of wide public support for its conservation.

Location Description (Figure 1) - We propose that the *Eubalaena Oculina* National Marine Sanctuary be located in north/central eastern Florida with boundaries extending from the south side of the mouth of the St. Johns River near Jacksonville (at 30.397°N, 81.315°W), southward to Malabar in Brevard County (at 28.000°N, 80.460°W), with the western boundary at the edge of Florida state waters and the eastern boundary at 79.888°W. The area includes the federal waters offshore of Duval, St. Johns, Flagler, Volusia and part of Brevard Counties. The exact coordinates to protect and expand North Atlantic Right Whale critical habitat and *Oculina* coral will be finalized by expert and public input during a public process that would follow acceptance of the nomination into the Sanctuary inventory. We realize that some of the proposed area includes existing protected areas (such as the *Oculina* Habitat Area of Particular Concern, managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council), and that there will have to be considerable coordination among several state (e.g., Florida Department of Environmental Protection) and federal (e.g., NOAA, NASA, USFWS, NPS) agencies.

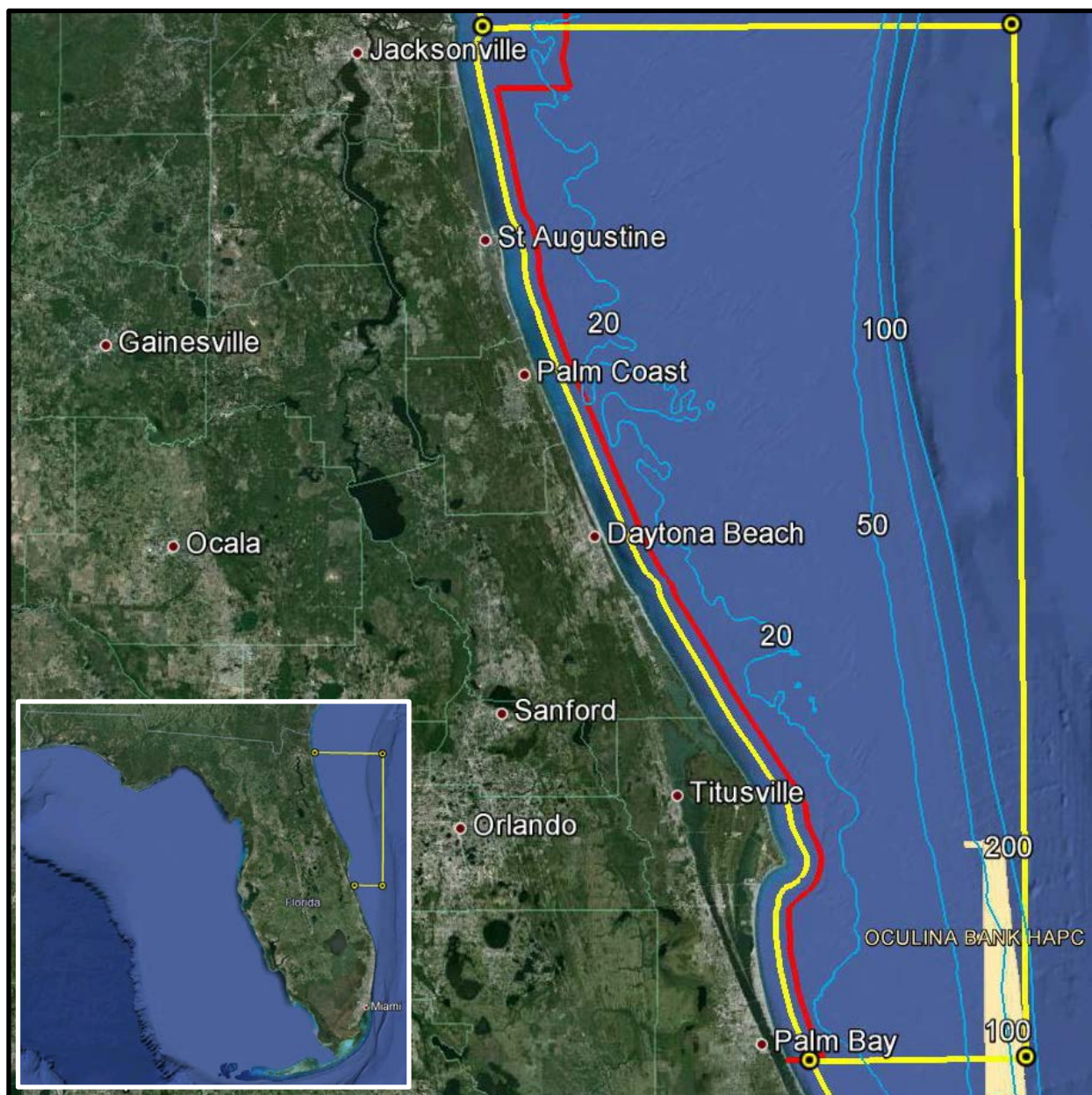


Figure 1. Google Earth image of proposed NMS boundaries (yellow), the portion of the North Atlantic Right Whale critical habitat included in the Sanctuary (inshore of the red line), and the existing *Oculina* Habitat Area of Particular Concern (beige polygon). The inshore boundary of the Sanctuary would be the offshore boundary of Florida state waters (yellow line along the coast). Depth contours are in meters.

SECTION III - CRITERIA INFORMATION

Criterion 1: Natural Resources and Ecological Qualities That are of Special Significance North Atlantic Right Whale

The North Atlantic Right Whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*), one of the two namesake species of the proposed Sanctuary, is a baleen whale that is the rarest of all large whale species and among the rarest of all marine mammals, with only about 500 individuals remaining. In sharp contrast to its current endangered status, the North Atlantic Right Whale once supported a thriving fishery off the coast of the U.S., and was a well-known cetacean in the marine fauna of Medieval Europe. It is now extinct in the eastern North Atlantic and nearly so in the western North Atlantic.² Right whales were once a preferred target for whalers, who reportedly considered them the "right" whales to hunt because of their tendencies to stay close to the coast, their docile nature, their slow surface-skimming feeding behaviors, and their high blubber content. Once harpooned, their blubber caused them to float at the surface of the water, making them easier to harvest than other whale species. They are currently among the most endangered whales in the world, and they are protected under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Ship strikes and fishing gear entanglement (which account for almost 50% of mortality since 1970) are their two greatest threats to recovery. The whales migrate back and forth, from their feeding grounds in the Gulf of Maine (and Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary), to their winter calving areas off of Georgia and Florida, passing near Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary off of Georgia. This is a dangerous route filled with heavy shipping traffic, longline fishing gear, and buoyed fish and lobster traps.

Baleen whales are also adversely affected by noise, as it interferes with their own sonic communication and can cause disorientation and altered behavior. Ship noise has been associated with chronic stress in North Atlantic Right Whales, and has implications for recovery of this species.³ Underwater detonations are also detrimental to the welfare of marine mammals. We are concerned that renewed seismic exploration for oil and gas off of northeast Florida, as well as noise associated with production platforms, pipelines, supply ships, and other equipment will interfere with the social and reproductive behavior of these endangered whales during critical birthing periods. Protection under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act is needed to prevent oil and gas activities in the critical habitat and birthing areas of North Atlantic Right Whale.

The proposed area's natural resources and ecological qualities (e.g., the Gulf Stream and Daytona Upwelling⁴) are of special significance and contribute to the biological productivity of the calving habitat of critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale. While this whale has just recently shown evidence of an increasing population, the species has not recovered and substantial protections are needed to ensure the whale's survival and recovery. A National Marine Sanctuary would maintain and enhance portions of the critical calving habitat of



Figure 2. An adult female North Atlantic Right Whale and calf, by Gill Braulik under Permit No. 655-1652.

the North Atlantic right whales south of Jacksonville, Florida. A National Marine Sanctuary off of northeast Florida would connect conservation efforts in the summer feeding grounds (Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary), migratory routes (Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary) and the winter calving and nursery grounds (*Eubalaena Oculina* National Marine Sanctuary). In 2011, the Marine Mammal Commission submitted a letter to former NOAA Administrator Dr. Lubchenco in support of a National Marine Sanctuary off of northeast Florida, that would contain the core of the right whale's calving and nursery ground.

Ivory Tree Coral

The Ivory Tree Coral (*Oculina varicosa*), the second of the namesake species of the proposed Sanctuary, is a deepwater coral that grows profusely 30 to 40 km off of the east coast of Florida, in depths from 50 to 150 m. This area is known as the Oculina Bank, and comprises a series of reefs, pinnacles, banks and capping mounds of sediment and coral rubble, built up upon an underlying fossil coral bank (lithified base structure). This species lives without zooxanthellae (symbiotic algae that support shallow corals) and may form extensive branching thickets over one meter tall. Over thousands of years, these thickets have built up mounds and ridges extending as much as 200 m laterally and 35 m above the surrounding seafloor.⁵ These unique bioherms are known to exist only off of the east coast of Florida, from Ft. Pierce to St. Augustine, a stretch of almost 150 km along the edge of the Florida-Hatteras slope beneath the western edge of the warm tropical waters of the Gulf Stream. In addition to *Oculina* corals, the area of the proposed Sanctuary has recently-discovered colonies of the deep-sea coral *Lophelia pertusa*, found in relatively shallow water.⁶

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council established special zones to protect banks of Ivory Tree Coral, and part of this *Oculina* Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC) is included in the proposed Sanctuary. The Council's action closed an area of 92 km² to trawling, dredging, longlining and trapping, among other restrictions. In 1994, the Council created the Experimental *Oculina* Research Reserve, closing the area to all bottom fishing indefinitely. These restrictions were put into place to protect spawning reef fishes, restore reef fish stocks, and protect particularly sensitive habitats or species assemblages of the coral and associated organisms. The Council's laudable efforts at habitat protection and fishery restoration unfortunately do not include protections against oil and gas exploration and production, which has the potential to cause physical damage to fishes, marine mammals and the corals, as well as noise levels that could disrupt normal behavior, including spawning behavior.⁷

The *Oculina* reef off of northeast Florida supports a high level of biodiversity and significant spawning sites for many species, including economically important snappers and groupers. A National Marine Sanctuary designation,

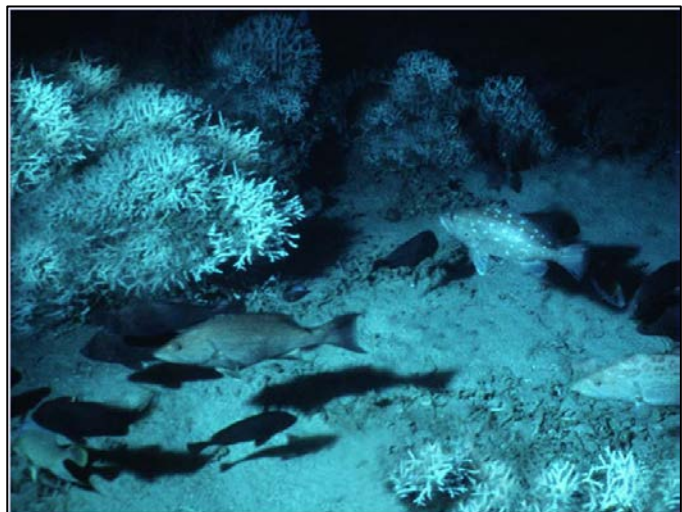


Figure 3. *Oculina* thickets support reef fishes such as (left to right) Blue Angelfish, Scamp (grouper) and Snowy Grouper.

which would include an area of the *Oculina* HAPC and extend east beyond the HAPC, would provide additional protection for this unique habitat and, through the education program of National Marine Sanctuaries, would encourage public awareness of the habitat, its fragility, and its value.

Sea Turtles

Sea turtles are some of the Earth's most ancient creatures. The seven species that exist today (five of which occur in the proposed area) have been in existence for millions of years, since the time of the dinosaurs. Sea turtles spend most of their lives in the water. Most of what is known about sea turtle behavior is obtained by observing females that leave the water to lay eggs and the hatchlings that emerge from those nests on the beach. Sea turtles, like salmon, will return to the same nesting grounds where they were born to have their own offspring. Only females come ashore, where they dig out a nest in the ground with their back flippers, bury their clutch of eggs and then immediately return to the ocean. After hatching, the young may take as long as a week to dig themselves out of the nest. They emerge at night, move toward the ocean and remain there, solitary, until it is time to mate. Sea turtles and their habitats face threats from climate change, coastal development, and increasing human use of their nesting and feeding habitats. Even when these threats do not directly kill sea turtles or destroy habitat, the added environmental stress and habitat degradation decreases nesting success, hatching success, and hatchling survivorship - all of which decrease loggerhead sea turtles' potential for reproduction and recovery.

The proposed Sanctuary includes portions of the recently-designated critical habitat for the Northwest Atlantic Ocean Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the Loggerhead Sea Turtle. The western boundary of the Sanctuary would be adjacent to the nearshore reproductive habitat (nesting beaches). Included within the proposed boundary are breeding areas, migratory corridors and *Sargassum* seaweed of the Gulf Stream, an important habitat for small juveniles.⁸ A globally-significant Loggerhead Sea Turtle population exists within the proposed area.⁹ A National Marine Sanctuary designation would contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of sea turtle habitat for this species and for endangered sea turtles (Leatherback, Kemp's Ridley, Hawksbill and Atlantic Green). Protecting nesting and feeding habitat and migratory corridors is essential to recovering all the threatened and endangered sea

Figure 4. Sea Turtles of northeast Florida.



turtle species, and reducing the risk of extinction.

As with marine mammals and fishes, sound production and hearing by turtles has been shown to be important in reproduction and other social behaviors.^{10 11}

Although critical habitat for Loggerhead Sea Turtle has been designated, this designation does not protect any sea turtles from sound pollution that may interfere with reproductive and other essential behaviors. Anthropogenic sound from oil and gas exploration and production could interfere with behavior of these threatened and endangered species.¹² National Marine Sanctuary designation would provide protection against this sound pollution.

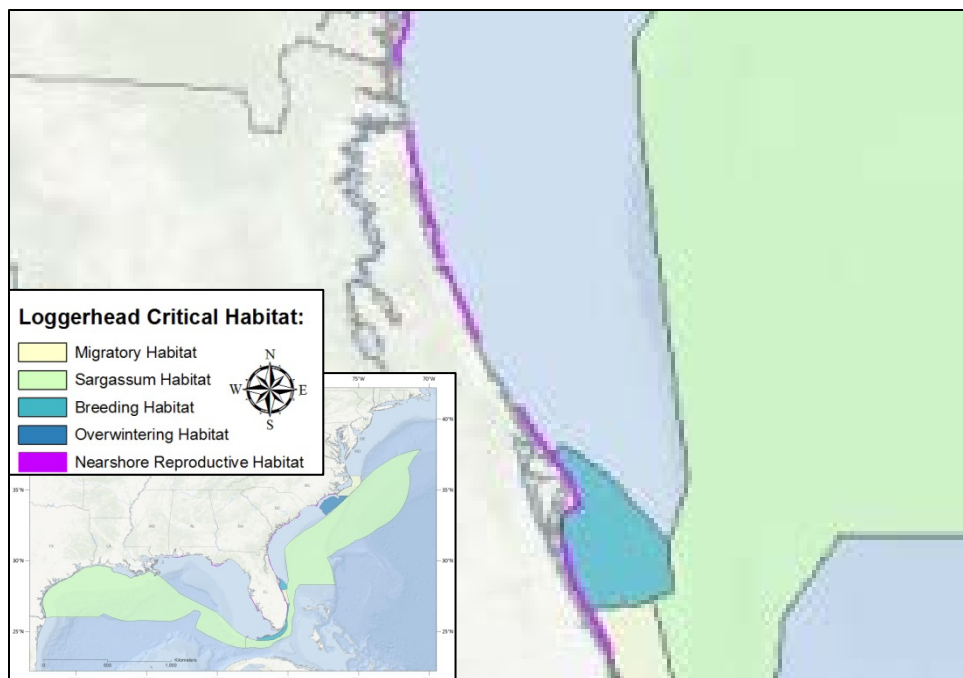


Figure 5. Critical habitat of Loggerhead Sea Turtle in the U.S. (inset) and off of northeast Florida.

The Crescent Beach Submarine Spring

The Crescent Beach Submarine Spring is located about 4 km off of the northeast coast of Florida, near Crescent Beach.¹³ It offers a unique opportunity to examine groundwater discharge, because the discharge greatly exceeds first order spring levels and is confined to one prominent solution feature. The Miocene confining unit as well as Plio-Pleistocene and younger overburden has been eroded away and therefore the principal Eocene artesian aquifer is in direct communication with the Atlantic Ocean. Submarine springs such as these provide rare habitats for unusual species such as Goliath Grouper and other ocean organisms that can tolerate lowered salinities. Submarine spring habitats are increasingly rare off of Florida, as many have stopped flowing due to aquifer overuse by human populations. Aquifer overuse on land can affect the benthic macrofauna of these unique ecosystems, which, in turn, could affect fisheries that depend on the macrofauna.¹⁴

Red Snapper Sink is another well-known sinkhole, 42 km off of Crescent Beach.¹⁵ This submarine collapse sinkhole is about 150 m deep and is believed to be a site of



Figure 6. Freshwater boils to the surface from 20-m depths at the Crescent Beach Submarine Spring off of Crescent Beach, St. Johns County.

saltwater intrusion into the Floridan aquifer, a major source of drinking water for Florida, coastal Georgia and parts of South Carolina. Red Snapper Sink has been a productive fishing area¹⁵, and there may be more springs and sinkholes that have yet to be discovered. Additional protections are needed to conserve submarine springs as rare marine habitats, and the Crescent Beach Spring is an excellent example of one of these rare features.

Fisheries Habitat and Important Finfish and Crustacean Fisheries

The continental shelf and shelf-edge off of northeast Florida is characterized by linear rock outcrops and patchy hard bottoms that support a diversity of reef-associated invertebrates and fishes.¹⁶ At the shelf edge (about 55 m deep), the rocky ledges are high in relief and very complex, and they support a high diversity and abundance of fish.¹⁷ Hogfish, Bank Sea Bass, Sand Perch, Tomtate, Red Snapper, Vermilion Snapper, Gag (grouper), Greater Amberjack, Knobbed Porgy, Red Porgy, Gray Triggerfish, Red Grouper, Tilefish, Snowy Grouper and Scamp (grouper) are commonly seen and caught on hard-bottom reefs off of St. Augustine. Speckled Hind, a rare grouper of particular conservation concern, has been seen and caught in the area¹⁷.

Courtship and/or observations of fish in spawning condition have been documented for Gag, Scamp, Tomtate, Vermilion Snapper, Hogfish and Gray Triggerfish at the shelf-edge reef off of northeast Florida.^{1, 17} This reef tract is an important spawning ground at all times of the year.

The coastal and offshore waters of Florida support valuable commercial fisheries for reef fish (e.g., snappers, groupers, grunts porgies, etc.), coastal pelagic species (e.g., mackerels), sharks, highly migratory species (e.g., Swordfish), Dolphinfin (mahi-mahi), Wahoo, shrimps, Spiny Lobster, Stone Crab and many other species. Total commercial landings from Florida were over 86 million pounds and \$170 million in 2008, with 64,744 jobs supported by commercial fishing¹⁸. Marine life landings (live fish and invertebrates for aquarium and other uses) in 2012

amounted to 9.8 million specimens worth nearly \$3.5 million in dockside value. From 1950 through 2013, an average of over 53 million pounds of fish, crustaceans and shellfish were landed per year in commercial fishing from the Atlantic waters of Florida, with a value of almost \$31 million per year¹⁹. The top four years of landings (which

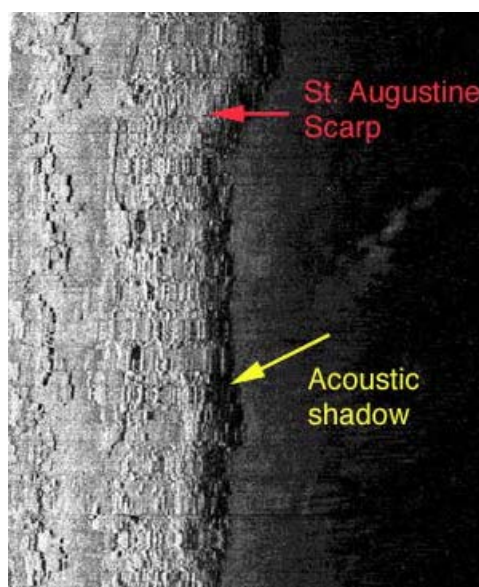
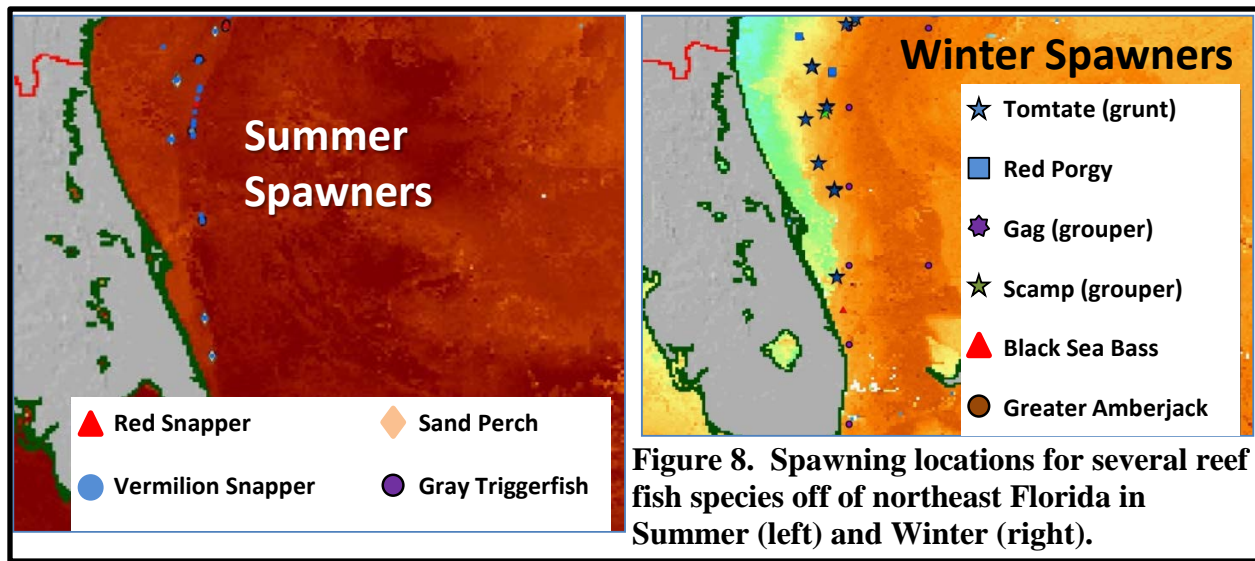


Figure 7. Photograph of the shelf-edge reef off of Jacksonville FL (above) and a side-scan sonar image of the shelf-edge reef off of St. Augustine (left). This reef is an important fish habitat and spawning ground that could be impacted by non-fishing activities such as oil and gas production.



were all in the 1950s) averaged over 123 million pounds per year, compared to the most recent four-year average of about 28 million pounds per year. The value of annual fishery landings from the east coast of Florida ranged as high as \$68 million (1994), and averaged nearly \$64 million for the four highest years (1994, 1996, 1989, 1995).

Recreational fisheries are also important in the Atlantic waters of Florida, including the area under consideration. Florida ranks first in the nation in saltwater anglers (2.4 million), and the 1.6 million saltwater licenses sold generate over \$29 million to support fisheries programs. The total economic impact of saltwater recreational fishing is around \$7.6 billion, including over 109,000 jobs.²⁰

Clearly the fisheries, and the habitats off of northeast Florida that support them, are an important part of the economy of Florida. National Marine Sanctuaries support thriving fisheries, simultaneously protecting the habitats that produce those harvests, while educating the public about their importance.

Nearby Estuaries

Although no state or estuarine waters are included in the proposed National Marine Sanctuary, the nominated area is spatially, hydrologically and biologically connected to two significant estuarine areas. The Indian River Lagoon and the Matanzas River Basin are cradles of biological diversity and productivity; 32 of the 34 known animal phyla can be found in ocean and coastal waters of these estuaries and, of these, 15 phyla occur exclusively in estuarine or marine environments.²¹ Many of these species spend part of their life cycles in the waters of the proposed Sanctuary.

The Indian River Lagoon is one of the most biologically diverse estuarine systems in the continental United States. Spanning 156 square miles, its habitats support more than 3,500 documented species of animals, plants, fungi and protists. The Matanzas River Basin occupies 186 square miles and also supports significant fish and wildlife resources. It contains the last relatively undisturbed and intact tidal marsh creek system along Florida's east coast and is home to one of only three open oyster harvesting beds in northeast Florida.

These estuaries are important nursery grounds for offshore species (including sharks, bony fishes and invertebrates) that live and reproduce in the proposed Sanctuary.^{22 23 24 25} These

two estuaries are connected hydrologically to the offshore ecosystem, and serve as sources of nutrients and sediments to offshore waters.^{26 27} A National Marine Sanctuary that connects with these important estuaries would enhance conservation of offshore life history stages of important species that are recruited to fisheries within the estuary and coastal lagoons of the region.

Criterion 2: Submerged Maritime Heritage Resources of Special Historical, Cultural, or Archaeological Significance

The proposed area is adjacent to the port of St. Augustine, America's oldest continually-occupied port. Once used by the prehistoric Native Americans (the Timucua); then by French, Spanish, and English colonists and enslaved Africans; and later by eighteenth-century Greek, Italian and Menorcan sailors and immigrants, the port is still very active today. The physical remains of dozens of shipwrecks²⁸ and archaeological sites lie on the beaches and in nearshore and offshore waters. The port is currently awaiting congressional approval of the designation as "Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area," which would be encompassed within a proposed National Historic Area.

Many of these sunken colonial-era ships sailed between St. Augustine and the Caribbean, encountering hostile fleets from other colonial powers, and the power of nature during Florida's hurricane season. The route established an archeological maritime connection between St. Augustine and Canaveral National Seashore (including Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge), which was explored during the 2014 NOAA-supported archeological expedition to locate the lost French fleet of Jean Ribault. The Spanish defeat of the French fleet was aided by the sinking of several of Ribault's ships during a history-changing hurricane off of Canaveral National Seashore.²⁹

The following historic resources within the Canaveral National Seashore are already listed in the National Register (NR) of Historic Places, and some have special or sacred meaning to the indigenous people of the region or nation:

- Old Haulover Canal (NR# 78000262)
- Ross Hammock Site (NR# 81000083) an extensive midden, salt works and two burial mounds
- Turtle Mound (NR#70000193), both a shell mound and a sand burial mound
- Seminole Rest (NR#97000231), a shell mound and two historic houses
- Moulton-Wells House (NR#01001247)

Other coastal National Historic Landmarks contained within the proposed area are the St. Augustine Town Plan Historic District (NR#70000847); Ponce de Leon Inlet Light Station (NR# 72000355); Cape Canaveral Air Force Station (NR#84003872); and Windover Archeological Site (NR#87000810).

Many additional coastal protected areas occur within state boundaries and state waters, and are not included in the nominated Sanctuary area. Like the Matanzas River and Indian River Lagoon complex, these coastal and semi-terrestrial areas are connected by biological processes (seasonal animal migration and movements among habitats with increasing age), tidal and coastal waters circulation, and freshwater runoff into the coastal ocean. These coastal reserves protect maritime heritage resources, as well as important biological assemblages, and include the following (from south to north):

Banana River Aquatic Preserve
Turnbull Hammock Conservation Area
Mosquito Lagoon Aquatic Preserve
Tomoka Marsh Aquatic Preserve

Tomoka State Park
Bulow Creek State Park
Graham Swamp Conservation Area
Faver-Dykes State Park
Matanzas State Forest
Anastasia State Park
Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Criterion 3: Supports Present and Potential Economic Uses

Tourism is the primary economic engine for Florida and ecotourism, such as wildlife viewing, is the most rapid area of growth within this sector. In 2006, the total spent on wildlife viewing in Florida was \$1.23 billion, with a total economic effect of \$5.2 billion, creating over 51,000 jobs. Statewide, recreational saltwater fishing is worth over \$5 billion and creates over 50,000 jobs for Florida's economy.^{30, 31} Ecotourism and recreational fishing depend completely upon conservation and sustainable management of the natural and cultural resources that tourists pay to see, and that anglers desire.

Estuarine and nearshore recreational fisheries of northeast Florida often target species that spawn offshore or live part of their lives there. While coastal and estuarine habitats are often protected (see lists of protected areas above under Criterion 2), the offshore habitats of these economically valuable fishery species are often not protected, and management is species-by-species. The estuarine areas where fisheries depend on healthy offshore ecosystems include The Indian River Lagoon, a diverse, shallow-water estuary stretching across 40 percent of Florida's east coast. Extending 156 miles from Ponce de Leon Inlet in Volusia County to the southern boundary of Martin County, the Lagoon is an important commercial and recreational fishery habitat and economic resource. The total estimated annual economic value of the lagoon is \$3.7 billion, supporting 15,000 full and part-time jobs and providing recreational opportunities for 11 million people per year.³² A National Marine Sanctuary protecting the connected offshore waters and life history stages of estuarine organisms would enhance the coastal recreational and commercial opportunities.

While fishing in Florida is a \$5 billion dollar business²⁰, wildlife viewing, which includes snorkeling and diving, whale and dolphin watching, sea turtle nesting tours and shore birding, has burgeoned into a significant market. In 2011, wildlife viewing activity generated more than \$4.9 billion and supported 44,623 full- and part-time jobs. A National Marine Sanctuary will enhance local and tourist recreational fishing by protecting the offshore habitats that many species use, including spawning habitats.

Florida ranks in the top five in the U.S. for the number of residents who participate in all types of wildlife viewing, including trips away from home, and feeding or viewing wildlife around the house. The 3.6 million wildlife watchers who live in Florida exceed the population of every metropolitan area in Florida except the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-Pompano Beach area³³. As many birds, mammals, fish and other wildlife use offshore habitats, protection of those areas in a Sanctuary will enhance wildlife viewing opportunities along the coast and offshore.

In 2011, more visitors traveled to Florida to see wildlife than any other state. The number of nonresident wildlife watchers in Florida has grown each year since 2001: by 52% from 2001 to 2006, and by 11% from 2006 to 2011. The number of participants who make day and overnight trips away from home specifically to view wildlife grew substantially in the five-

year period from 2006 to 2011 (22% increase).³⁴ In 2011, Florida residents who enjoyed viewing wildlife around their homes (3.3 million) outnumbered the population of 28 states.³³

The total spent annually in Florida for wildlife viewing is two and a quarter times greater than the value of the state's annual orange crop harvest (\$1.2 billion in 2011).³³ Travel-related spending associated with wildlife viewing in Florida has increased from \$675 million in 2001 to more than \$1.4 billion in 2011; the overall economic effect of wildlife-viewing travel (food, fuel, lodging, etc.), equipment, and accessories in Florida was \$2.7 billion in 2011. Tax revenues in 2011 related to wildlife viewing in Florida amounted to nearly \$285 million at the state and local levels, and nearly \$397 million at the federal level.³⁵

The Florida Wildlife Commission's (FWC) Florida Wildlife Legacy Initiative states the following: "Part of the foundation of Florida's economy is Florida's wildlife and habitat diversity. The combined revenue from hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, boating and commercial enterprises exceeds \$25 billion in value annually. The Initiative is important because it promotes pro-active efforts to conserve wildlife and habitat before they decline further. And the Initiative saves millions of tax dollars by preventing wildlife declines before they become more rare and costly to protect. The Initiative promotes and builds partnerships. Working together, partners can pool time, money and staff to more effectively address the challenges facing wildlife today. At its heart, the Initiative is a promise to future generations of Floridians that they, too, can enjoy Florida's rich and diverse wildlife heritage and family traditions".³⁶ Essential to the future enjoyment of wildlife viewing is protection of the offshore areas where many of the species that enthusiasts enjoy spend part of their lives.

Spending on water sports such as SCUBA diving and surfing are also an important part of the Florida economy. Both of these activities depend on resource management to maintain clean, clear water and clean beaches. An estimate of the economic scale of the surfing industry, including travel, surf-branded clothing and the manufacture of surfboards, is on the order of \$10 billion per year and reaches into most countries on the planet. While this is an impressive number, it is likely to significantly under-account for the total economic value of recreational surfing.³⁷ Surfing

represents a very profitable market, a growing industry, and a reason people move to coastal areas. Surfing plays a major part in the recreation and tourism strategies for many coastal locations. Any negative impact to the surfing amenity (such as an oil spill) in these locations may have serious consequences for the resident surfing population, visitors to the area, the local surf industry and the entire local coastal economy. The estimated economic value of surf



Figure 9. Surfing is a popular sport on northeast Florida beaches, and it requires clean waters and beaches to continue to attract participation.

tourism is \$21 million dollars a year in Brevard County alone.

Criterion 4: Aesthetic, recreation and access benefits of conservation and management.

The north/central eastern coast of Florida prides itself on accessible public beach access. Miles of clean beautiful beaches attract millions every year from around the world.³⁸ Substantial investments have been and are being made in preserving Florida's coastal natural resources, enabling visitors to easily view and access these beaches. Beach

access includes three of Florida's Scenic Byways which occur along the north central eastern coastline covering 258 miles: The AIA Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway, the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail and the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway.^{39, 40, 41} These designated scenic highways “promote a heightened awareness of the state's exceptional resource and unique history through educational and visual experience”.⁴²

As the public continues to expand their interest in and support of Florida wildlife, membership in local and grassroots wildlife-based organizations continues to grow. The attraction of surfing, diving and snorkeling clubs, of becoming a “citizen scientist”, “master naturalist” or volunteering for sea turtle patrol or North Atlantic right whale spotting is undeniable, and volunteers come from around the country and the world to participate and celebrate. A few examples include the 1,368 individuals who monitor the area's beaches for nesting turtles throughout the summer under FWC-designated sea turtle permit holders, and the Annual Right Whale Festival (a celebration of the whale’s “homecoming” to its winter calving grounds) had an attendance of 7,000 people in 2013.

Access to offshore shipwrecks by the public is problematic for the public, and for the shipwrecks themselves. A National Marine Sanctuary designation would increase public access to land-based education programs and exhibits about marine archeology, and would complement the existing Florida Maritime Heritage Trail.⁴³ This series of visitor centers and web sites is “all about public access to Florida's natural and cultural coastal resources” through education and exhibits. The considerable experience of the National Marine Sanctuary system in maritime heritage and associated outreach and education would further raise public awareness and appreciation for these assets, and thus help in their conservation and increase their value in education.

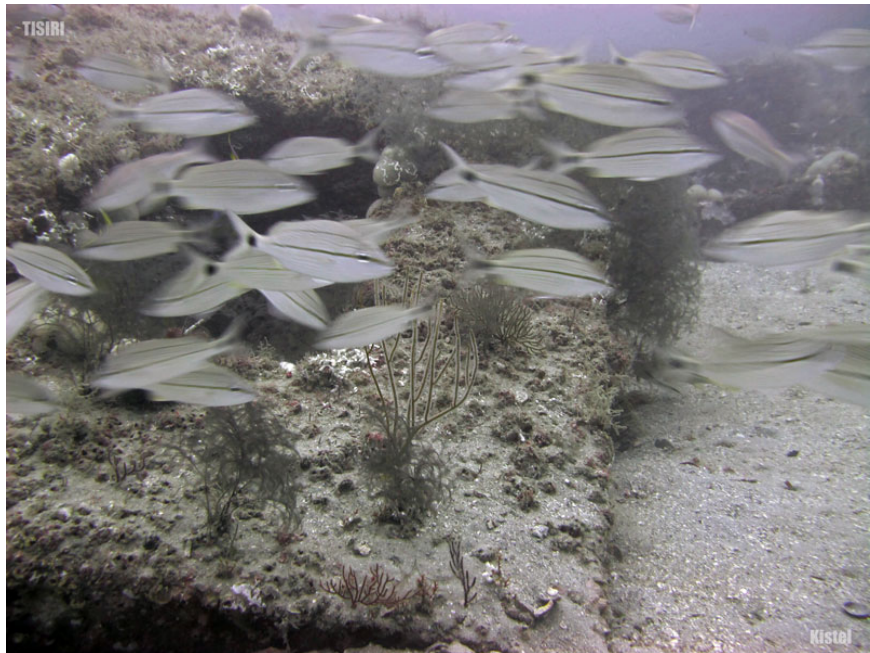


Figure 10. Reefs off of northeast Florida provide opportunities for wildlife viewing, with reasonable visibility and a great diversity of fish (such as Tomtate, above) and invertebrates.

SECTION IV - CONSIDERATION INFORMATION

Consideration 1: Enhanced Marine Science and Archeological Research Opportunities

The proposed area for a National Marine Sanctuary provides many unique and interesting research opportunities, and facilities to participate in such research. For example, The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum oversees the Lighthouse Archeological Maritime Program, which most recently participated with other Florida partners in a NOAA expedition to search for the remains of Jean Ribault's fleet.⁴⁴ This 16th-century armada operated between Jacksonville and Cape Canaveral, intent upon establishing a French colonial presence in southeastern North America.

The following scientific, educational and archeological institutions are also vested in marine science research and education (including graduate education) in the area:

- The University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience (<http://www.whitney.ufl.edu/>)
- The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (<http://gtmnerr.org/Research.php>)
- Harbor Branch Florida Atlantic University (<http://fau.edu/hboi/>)
- The University of North Florida (<http://www.unf.edu/>)
- The Smithsonian Institution Affiliations:
 - St. Augustine Lighthouse Museum (<https://affiliations.si.edu/AffiliateDetail.Asp?AffiliateID=252>);
 - Museum of Arts and Sciences in Daytona (<https://affiliations.si.edu/AffiliateDetail.Asp?AffiliateID=86>);
 - Smithsonian Marine Station at Ft. Pierce (<http://www.sms.si.edu/IRLSpec/index.htm>).

These research, educational, and archeological institutions are constantly looking for opportunities to partner with NOAA and other agencies to support their research and to provide internships, research and other opportunities for their staff and students. A National Marine Sanctuary will help focus those research efforts on the natural and cultural resources within the Sanctuary to answer broader questions in marine sciences and archaeology.

Consideration 2: Enhanced Education Opportunities.

There are numerous existing programs in the region that contribute to education or enhance understanding of the marine environment. Many of them are focused on specific habitats (e.g., saltmarsh or archaeology), and a complementary and comprehensive National Marine Sanctuary education effort would greatly enhance these valuable education programs.

In marine archeology education, The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum offers two programs, the Lighthouse Archeology Maritime Program and the First Light Maritime Society. These programs explore underwater archeology through research, citizen science and education programs on over 170 shipwrecks lost in the waters off of the area. As noted above, The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum is a Smithsonian Affiliate site, and Smithsonian education programs enhance outreach efforts by bringing Smithsonian scholars to the area for public programs that include general outreach and high school and university students.⁴⁵

In addition to the Smithsonian Institution, other research partners listed under Consideration 1 also have marine education programs that would benefit from having the “living classroom” of a National Marine Sanctuary. These agencies and institutions of higher education have successful informal, undergraduate and graduate education programs in marine sciences

that would complement and benefit from working with National Marine Sanctuary education programs. These institutions include:

- Jacksonville University:
 - undergraduate (<http://www.ju.edu/biology/Pages/Marine-Science-Undergraduate-Program.aspx>)
 - graduate (<http://www.ju.edu/biology/Pages/Marine-Science-Graduate-Program.aspx>) programs
- Flagler College (<http://www.flagler.edu/>):
 - Coastal Environmental Science program (<http://www.flagler.edu/academics/departments-programs/natural-sciences/program-majors-minors/coastal-environmental-science/>)
- The University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience (<http://www.whitney.ufl.edu/>):
 - undergraduate (<http://www.whitney.ufl.edu/academic/undergrad-reu/>)
 - graduate (<http://www.whitney.ufl.edu/academic/grad-post-doctoral/>) programs in marine science
- The Guana Tolomato National Estuarine Research Reserve: (<http://gtmnerr.org/Education.php>)
 - Environmental Education Center (<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gtm/education/center.htm>)
- Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute (<http://fau.edu/hboi/>):
 - undergraduate (<http://fau.edu/hboi/education/sbts.php>)
 - graduate (<http://fau.edu/hboi/education/graduatedegrees.php>)
 - Ocean Discovery Center for public outreach (<http://fau.edu/hboi/community/odc.php>)
- The University of North Florida (<http://www.unf.edu/>)
- Florida Sea Grant
 - education (<https://www.flseagrant.org/education/>)
 - extension programs (<http://flseagrant.ifas.ufl.edu/>).

Consideration 3: Threats to the Area

The most immediate threat to the area is offshore oil and gas exploration and production and the sonic and seismic exploratory acoustics and petroleum transport that accompanies those activities. There is renewed and high-level interest in petroleum deposits that may exist off the northeast coast of Florida.⁴⁶ This is of grave concern to wide segments of the coastal community⁴⁷, including maritime archaeologists and historians, tourists, oceanfront homeowners, fishermen, surfers, tourism operators, environmentalists and other groups that use ocean resources.

Additional threats to be considered in this area are accelerated, unmanaged use of the coastal and offshore areas; lack of public awareness about the fragile North Atlantic Right Whale calving grounds, sea turtle nesting habitat, important fisheries habitat and manatee byways; and the effects of climate change and ocean acidification,. These potential impacts have not been adequately evaluated as to their detriment to this unique and biodiverse area.

The National Marine Sanctuary Act can be used to prohibit oil and gas exploration and production in these very important habitats. Sanctuary designation may be the only way to protect fragile species and habitats from the damaging effects of offshore energy extraction. Sanctuary education programs can be used to educate the public and policy makers regarding the importance and value of Florida's natural and cultural resources in the ocean.

Consideration 4: The Unique Value of National Marine Sanctuary Designation for This Area

A National Marine Sanctuary provides additional protection for the habitats of threatened and endangered species, and would bring international recognition to the significance of the calving grounds of the North Atlantic Right Whale, a critically endangered species. The nominated area includes nesting, foraging and migration habitat for five species of federally-listed sea turtles, including designated critical habitat for Loggerhead Sea Turtles. The National Marine Sanctuary program is uniquely qualified and authorized to protect the habitats, forage species and life support system of these listed species.

Sanctuary designation would protect the offshore habitats that are hydrologically, spatially and biologically connected to two nationally significant estuaries. These estuaries are vitally important for the biological cycles of fish and other economically valuable species that complete portions of their life cycles offshore in the waters that would be protected in this Sanctuary. Sanctuary designation would provide additional protection for fishes, particularly on known spawning grounds, by preventing the disturbance caused by seismic air-gun blasting and oil and gas extraction. By protecting living marine resource species, their habitats and their oceanic life history stages, this National Marine Sanctuary would serve as an area for special research and monitoring - particularly for comparison with sites that remain unprotected. The Sanctuary would allow for monitoring of baseline conditions in a relatively pristine area for determining the effects of human impacts, such as low-frequency sound used in acoustic surveys and emitted from oil production platforms. This National Marine Sanctuary would serve as a sentinel site for monitoring and understanding subtropical marine ecosystems.

A National Marine Sanctuary would also protect the as-yet undiscovered artifacts that may exist in and around the Crescent Beach Spring and other unexplored submarine springs and sinkholes. The Crescent Beach Spring was on land during lowered sea level of the Pleistocene,⁴⁸ and could have been used by American Indians, as was often done for other sinkholes, springs and cenotes in the southern parts of North America and in Central America during this ice age.^{49, 50} This unique undersea archeological, geological and biological resource needs the enhanced protection a National Marine Sanctuary would provide. A Sanctuary would further enhance and preserve a unique maritime archeological history and artifacts, both known (shipwrecks) and yet to be discovered (shipwrecks, American Indian sites); and would provide and conserve an extraordinary research area and educational materials of national significance.

A National Marine Sanctuary would complement and further conserve the sizeable investments made by institutions such as the University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience, the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve, and Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, none of which can function or have purpose without a healthy ocean for their important research.

A National Marine Sanctuary would bring recognition to this part of the world ocean as a biologically diverse, productive yet fragile environment that contains many unique or rare species and habitats. The Sanctuary would provide an educational forum, a natural classroom, and educational materials that will attract education, research, tourism, recreation, and further enhance the attractiveness of Florida's marine resources to the public.

As previously noted, The National Marine Sanctuary Act can be used to prohibit oil and gas exploration and production in these critically important habitats. Sanctuary designation may be the only way to protect endangered species, productive marine resources, important tourism

assets, maritime history artifacts and unique habitats from further damage cause by offshore energy extraction.

Consideration 5: Complementary Existing Management.

NOAA, other federal agencies, and several state and local management authorities and regulations would be complemented by a sound management plan developed for the *Oculina Eubalaena* National Marine Sanctuary. Existing authorities provide management for many individual species (e.g., endangered species, marine mammals, fishery species), but habitats and associated organisms often remain unprotected, and the most common and diverse groups of species (e.g., many algae and invertebrates) receive no protection at all. National Marine Sanctuary designation would extend protection to these vulnerable species and habitats.

Some of the more important existing authorities and management programs that would be complemented include the following:

- 1) NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Protected Resources Division, is charged with the recovery of the North Atlantic Right Whale, with a goal of down-listing the species status from endangered to threatened. A National Marine Sanctuary and its protections against oil and gas exploration and production would be particularly helpful in the recovery of whale populations, which are sensitive to the noise pollution that emanates from petroleum activities on the continental shelf.
- 2) NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, Sustainable Fisheries Division, is charged with management of saltwater fishery species for sustainable harvest. NOAA Fisheries Service works with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to develop and enact management plans for fishery species, and to provide enforcement of federal fishery and conservation laws. These programs would benefit from the research, management, education and enforcement programs of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has expressed interest in cooperating in the development of this Sanctuary, to complement their management efforts on fishery species and habitats.⁵¹
- 3) The cooperative NOAA-Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve covers 74,000 acres of coastal lands in northeast Florida from Ponte Vedra Beach to Palm Coast. It includes the Guana River Marsh Aquatic Preserve that extends offshore into state waters (three miles). The GTM Research Reserve is part of a national system of research reserves that focus on research, education and stewardship. Although not part of the proposed National Marine Sanctuary, the Reserve is connected hydrologically, spatially and biologically to the offshore habitats and species of the proposed Sanctuary. The GTM Research Reserve has a 21,000 square foot Environmental Education Center which includes interpretive exhibits, aquariums, classrooms, teaching and working laboratories, an auditorium and an outdoor amphitheater overlooking the Guana River Aquatic Preserve. Education staff offer programming for all ages on the importance of estuarine ecosystems. A Coastal Training Program offers training for professionals on issues of concern in our local community including watershed, invasive plants and much more. This facility, with some expansion, could house a visitor center for the Sanctuary, with mutually-beneficial education programs.
- 4) The U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service manages the Canaveral National Seashore, which was established to "preserve and protect the outstanding natural,

scenic, scientific, ecological, and historic values of certain lands, shoreline, and waters of the State of Florida, and to provide for public outdoor recreation use and enjoyment of the same”, and “to ensure the continuing protection of the natural features and to afford opportunities for leisure activities in an undeveloped uncrowded setting.”⁵² The shoreline and waters of Canaveral National Seashore are spatially, hydrologically and biologically connected to the nominated National Marine Sanctuary, and the National Seashore would benefit from the protections provided to offshore waters by a National Marine Sanctuary.

- 5) The U.S. Department of the Interior’s National Park Service also manages Castillo de San Marcos National Monument and the Fort Matanzas National Monument in St. Augustine. The nominators have received a letter of support from the Superintendent (will be forwarded with nomination package), stating that “The National Park Service is pleased to endorse and support the establishment of a National Marine Sanctuary in Northeast Florida and that “We fully support efforts that complement our mission and contribute to the quality of resource stewardship in Northeast Florida.” The monuments’ Superintendent would like to work with ONMS to further complement ONMS efforts to “preserve and protect the resources that make our area unique.”
- 6) The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Fish and Wildlife Service manages Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge and is responsible for the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish and wildlife populations and their habitats in the refuge. Although the Fish and Wildlife Service shares some conservation responsibilities with other federal, state, tribal, local, and private entities throughout the nation, it has specific trustee obligations for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, anadromous fish, and certain marine mammals within a national network of lands and waters established for the management and protection of these resources.⁵³ The proposed Sanctuary is physically and biologically connected to these important nearshore, estuarine and terrestrial habitats, and management of the offshore components of these connected ecosystems would benefit the Wildlife Refuge, and vice versa.
- 7) Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute conducts aerial surveys each winter in an effort to reduce ship strike collisions with North Atlantic Right Whales. Institute biologists respond to reports of dead, injured, and entangled whales and conduct research including photo identification and genetic sampling of right whales. Through the use of Geographic Information Systems and other technology, the Institute creates maps and other products used in whale management and conservation efforts.⁵⁴ Acoustic monitoring, whale observing, education and enforcement activities of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries would enhance these state, as well as federal, efforts to protect and recover the North Atlantic Right Whale.

Consideration 6: Partnerships and Collaboration

There are several agencies, facilities, organizations and institutions within the project area that provide opportunities for partnerships and collaboration (see lists in Criterion 2 and in Considerations 1, 2 and 5). In addition, the preparers of this nomination have received (and will forward with this nomination document) letters of support from some potential partners, who have indicated a willingness to collaborate. These include:

- The Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience has offered **office space** and **vessel time** to support the success of the Sanctuary (letter on file).

- Matanzas Riverkeeper offers “resources for a possible partnership” and “will gladly share...**office space, vessel time** and/or other **resources**” (letter on file).
- Center for Biological Diversity (Florida office) has complementary interests in conserving the biodiversity of the area (letter on file).
- Indian Riverkeeper “brings to the table...the resources of our dedicated advocates” (letter on file). This organization has been involved in North Atlantic Right Whale studies and disentanglements.
- The Marine Science Research Institute at Jacksonville University “looks forward to the opportunity to work with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries on the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary” (letter on file).
- The U.S. Department of the Interior’s National Park Service has submitted a letter stating their support for complementary programs and asking how they can support this nomination and the efforts of ONMS to provide complementary management that will further protect the area (letter on file).

Because of the preliminary nature of this first step in the Sanctuary nomination process, we have not yet obtained commitments for collaboration from all supporters and stakeholders. The supporters listed above have offered their resources to establishing and managing the Sanctuary, without any solicitation of commitment on our part; however, we have begun actively soliciting commitments, and those will be forwarded to the Director of National Marine Sanctuaries, along with additional letters of support. Additional possible commitments include:

- Florida State University Coastal and Marine Laboratory
- National and state parks, seashores, monuments and wildlife refuges
- Additional academic institutions

Consideration 7: Diverse Community Support

The proposed *Eubalaena Oculina* National Marine Sanctuary has a broad base of support at the local, state and national levels, and this support is evidenced in letters and emails submitted along with this nomination document. The local community-based support for the nomination represents a diverse group of interested businesses, individuals, conservation organizations, citizen/community associations, academic institutions, students (the future generation of concerned citizens) and governmental entities. The following is a list of supporters at the time of nomination submittal:

- Conservation organizations (non-governmental)
 - Marine Mammal Commission
 - Center for Biological Diversity
 - Eastman Environmental
 - Environmental Youth Council
 - Matanzas Riverkeeper
 - Florida Wildlife Federation
 - Friends of Matanzas, Inc.
 - Indian Riverkeeper
 - Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol
 - Reef Relief
 - Sierra Club Florida
 - Marine Resources Council, Inc.

- Individuals with relevant expertise:
 - Capt. Brendan Burke, maritime archeologist
 - Dr. Mark Martindale, Director of University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience
 - Capt. George Geiger, Chairman of Marine Protected Area Federal Advisory Committee
 - Dr. Felicia Coleman, Director FSU Coastal and Marine Laboratory
 - Dr. A. Quinton White, Director JU Marine Science Research Institute
 - Dr. Leslie S. Babonis, UF Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience
 - Brian Silliman, Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University
 - Jim Muller, Muller and Associates, environmental consultants
 - Peter Stone, award-winning author of *Waltzes with Giants: The Twilight Journey of the North Atlantic Right Whale*
 - Todd Z. Osborne, Assistant Professor, Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience
 - Holly Thompson-Smoyer, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
 - Maggie Allen, Master's Candidate, University of Washington School for Marine and Environmental Affairs
 - Sarah Bailey, former St. Johns County Commissioner
- Academic institutions
 - The Florida State University Coastal and Marine Laboratory
 - Jacksonville University 's Marine Science Research Institute
 - University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience
- Local businesses, tour operators
 - Genung's Fish Camp
 - Southern Horticulture
 - Southern Realty
 - St Augustine Eco Tours
 - Coastal Traders
 - Coker Photographics
 - Herbie Wiles Insurance
 - Synergy Asset Strategies, Inc.
- Governments, agencies and community associations
 - Mayor of the Town of Marineland, Florida
 - South Anastasia Communities Association
 - Mayor of St. Augustine, Florida
 - Superintendent of Castillo de San Marcos National Monument & Fort Matanzas National Monument

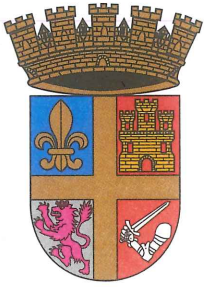
In addition to the above supporters, letters of support have been received (as of April 21, 2015) from 35 individual citizens, and 44 individuals have signed a petition supporting the nomination. We anticipate that additional supporters and partners will be added to Considerations 6 and 7 after the re-submittal of this nomination application as the word spreads to additional communities in the area, and those will be forwarded via the nominations web site.

End Notes:

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Appendix
Letters of Support



City of St. Augustine

St. Augustine, Florida

Office of the Mayor



January 29, 2015

To whom it may concern,

As Mayor of the City of St. Augustine, Florida, I am pleased to endorse and pledge support for the establishment of the Eubalaena-Oculina National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of Northeast Florida.

Since its founding in 1565, St. Augustine and its citizens have benefited from and lived in partnership with the spectacular bounty of the adjacent marine ecosystem. This relationship has defined, in large part, who we are as a community living along the Atlantic Coast. Like the Indigenous peoples of this region who lived sustainably with the natural world for thousands of years before first European contact, we recognize our responsibility to be good stewards of this area.

We are honored to endorse the acceptance of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's invitation to communities across the nation to nominate their most treasured places for inclusion in a National Marine Sanctuary, and look forward to establishing new partnerships and collaborative efforts with the goal of protecting the remarkable biological, historical, and cultural resources along the northeast coast of Florida.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance in this process.

Sincerely,

Nancy E. Shaver
Mayor

NES/lf



September 8, 2014

Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

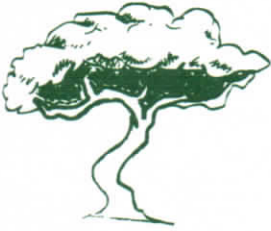
RE: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director:

I am writing to express my **steadfast support** for the designation of the **Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary in Northeast Florida**. I offer my support for this project in two capacities: first, I am a research scientist at the University of Florida's Whitney Lab for Marine Bioscience. At the Whitney lab, I study the development and evolution of marine organisms that serve as bio-indicators for climate change; thus, I am deeply concerned with the health of our oceans and the long-term ability of our oceans to support the diverse aquatic species that depend on this fragile habitat for survival. Second, as Mayor of the Town of Marineland I feel strongly that it is the obligation of the government to ensure protection of the environment such that future generations are able to enjoy it as we have. You may not know this, but the town of Marineland was recently designated "Florida's first remarkable coastal place." Although we are a small community, we are united in our goal of providing a destination for visitors interested in education, science, nature, and otherwise engaging with the environment in a low/no-impact manner. Additionally, Marineland currently serves as the headquarters for the long-term monitoring of Northern Right Whales in the Atlantic and is soon to be home to a new sea turtle hospital! Designation of the waters off the coast of North Florida as a marine sanctuary would fit nicely with our vision for a greener future and would further our efforts to monitor and protect the endangered species that make Marineland such a unique place. I urge you to join me in supporting this project aimed at protecting the health of our oceans!

Sincerely,

Leslie S. Babonis, PhD
Mayor, Town of Marineland



South Anastasia Communities Association

Protecting and Preserving Florida Communities

P.O. Box 840255 • St. Augustine, FL 32080
sacamessage@gmail.com

September 24, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director:

The South Anastasia Communities Association (SACA) is a non-profit organization located in southern St Johns county in Florida that has as its mission the preservation and protection of the quality of life and the environment along the southern coast of our county. We have approximately 200 members who are concerned about the place where we live in terms of the historical and cultural resources as well as the environment.

This area encompasses a vital section of federally designated critical habitat for the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale and a considerable portion of the newly designated critical habitat for the threatened loggerhead sea turtle. It also provides habitat for the endangered leatherback, Atlantic green sea turtles and is an economically significant fish habitat including the Oculina reef.

In terms of cultural and historical resources, St. Augustine, the nation's oldest port and city and Cape Canaveral, home to the lost French fleet of Jean Ribault, are nationally significant archeological and maritime areas.

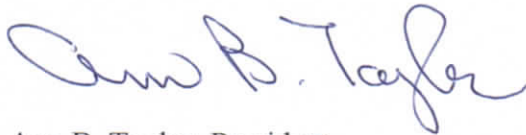
A National Marine Sanctuary designation would maintain and enhance the critically endangered population of the North Atlantic right whale, preserve the important fisheries habitat including the Oculina reef, the Matanzas River Basin, and the Indian River Lagoon basin. It would insure that significant maritime and archeological material is managed and protected. **Most importantly it would prevent the drilling of oil and gas and the seismic testing that is proposed for this area which would be disastrous for the marine ecosystem.**

Local and State agencies have regulations aimed at protecting specific marine resources, but no other federal agency is directly mandated to comprehensively conserve and manage special areas of the marine environment like the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

The National Marine Sanctuaries Act protects nationally significant places and addresses the need for protection of marine ecosystem and cultural resources. The northeast coast of Florida has unusually high quality estuarine and marine areas as well remarkable historical and cultural resources. Recognizing the vulnerability of these resources, we support the designation of an extended National Marine Sanctuary for our area.

We urge the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to provide the needed protection for this area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ann B. Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ann" and last name "Taylor" clearly legible.

Ann B. Taylor, President
South Anastasia Communities Association



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Castillo de San Marcos National Monument

&

Fort Matanzas National Monument

1 South Castillo Drive

St. Augustine, Florida 32084

904-829-6506

IN REPLY REFER TO:

January 13, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

The National Park Service is pleased to endorse and support the establishment of a National Marine Sanctuary in Northeast Florida. Although the boundary of Fort Matanzas National Monument ends at the mean high water mark, natural processes do not recognize or limit impacts as a result of man-made parameters. Preservation of ecosystems and natural processes are near and dear to the heart and mission of the National Park Service. We fully support efforts that complement our mission and contribute to the quality of resource stewardship in Northeast Florida.

Of equal importance is the opportunity to nourish new partnerships and collaborative efforts in our region of influence. We look forward to engaging with new partners and establishing synergistic relationships that preserve and protect the resources that make our area unique.

Please let us know how we can further compliment your efforts.

Sincerely,

Gordon J. Wilson
Superintendent

January 13, 2015

Dan Basta,
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Mr. Basta,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed **Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary**.

As an educator and author of an award-winning book about the North Atlantic right whale, I am familiar with the issues and benefits of Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary. I live in Massachusetts and have also taught and lectured in Florida.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy, just as Stellwagen Bank NMS has been a boon in Massachusetts.

It would protect more than 138,00 mega fauna from negative impacts of oil and gas exploration. Many of these species are endangered and protected under the Marine Mammal Act.

The habitat of the highly endangered North Atlantic right whales and their calving grounds must also be protected under the Marine Mammal Act.

If you would like more information about the North Atlantic right whale, I would be happy to send you a copy of *Waltzes with Giants, The Twilight Journey of the North Atlantic Right Whale* (Skyhorse, 2012), Winner of the USA Best Book Awards and a selection of the Children's Book-of-the-Month Club. (www.petercstonestudios.com)

The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be preserved and studied.

Finally, as I'm sure you are aware, marine sanctuaries actually benefit recreational and commercial fishing interests.

Thank you for your efforts on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Peter C. Stone



Daniel J. Basta
Director
NOAA, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
sanctuary.nominations@noaa.gov

29 September 2014

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Mr. Basta,

I am writing in support of the designation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary in northeast Florida. While Director of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory for ten years, I was involved in many aspects of Florida's natural resources, including protection of coastal areas. The Inventory's data was one of the sources used in the establishment of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. I also served as a member of the National Estuarine Research Reserve Florida East Coast Site Selection Committee, which nominated the Guana Tolomato Matanzas area to be a NERR. As a member of The Nature Conservancy International Task Force on Site Selection in the 1990s, I helped develop criteria to identify internationally important sites for protection.

In 2009, I was a consultant to the Friends of Matanzas in their initial efforts to establish a marine protected area in northeast Florida. Through my literature research of the area, it quickly became evident that the natural and archaeological resources deserved protection. After considerable discussion, the Friends decided to pursue designation of a National Marine Sanctuary in the area.

The Friends have diligently pursued establishment of a sanctuary for the coastal and marine resources of the area, consulting with varied stakeholders and elected officials. The resources clearly justify the designation: critical habitat for endangered species, including the calving grounds for the North Atlantic right whale; important, biologically diverse fish habitat including *Oculina* reefs; and rich cultural artifacts. The protection, research and monitoring that are integral components of a National Marine Sanctuary are critical to the continued existence of these resources.

The time is ripe for designation of the area as a National Marine Sanctuary. I strongly encourage you initiate the process. NOAA's robust public process for establishment of a National Marine Sanctuary will provide a public forum for stakeholders to express their views and work together to design a sanctuary that protects the resources while providing for suitable public and economic use of the area.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if I can be of assistance.

Best regards,

Jim Muller
Principal

RE: Proposed National marine Sanctuary

Feb 13, 2015

To whom it may concern,

I write to you today both as a faculty member at the University of Florida and as an environmentally conscious citizen to support the proposed National Marine Sanctuary here on northeast Atlantic coast of Florida. As a researcher, I have significant support for this designation as I am very aware of the unique natural resources of this area and the extreme value they have to the scientific community. This area is home to the transitional ecotone between mangrove dominated coastal systems to the south and the more historic salt marshes to the north. Not only is this a stunningly visual reminder of climate change but a tremendously valuable research opportunity and is currently the central focus of over twenty five federal and state research projects. Further, the unique natural features within the proposed NMS include a very rare series of submarine springs offshore of Crescent Beach (two of less than a dozen documented offshore springs in Florida). First scientifically described by G.T. Rude in 1925, but known historically to sailors and Native Americans for hundreds of years, the submarine springs offer a very rare opportunity to study biogeochemistry and microbiological community structure of extreme environments. In this case, the continual fluctuation of salinity between freshwater and full saltwater extremes has allowed the development of unique biological communities that have been poorly studied to date. These rare springs offer insight into several important scientific questions such as how microbially mediated chemical reactions are modulated by environmental conditions. As issues such as sealevel rise and climate change continue to move forward, much uncertainty remains as to how our coastal and nearshore ecosystems will respond to these changes. The unique submarine springs here offer an opportunity to explore those very questions. These springs are currently the focus of a multi-million dollar collaborative research proposal investigating the aforementioned processes.

As a citizen, I support this designation because it is extremely well positioned as a representative ecosystem, encompassing a coastline with strong historical ties to ocean going trade and settlement. As the oldest European settlement on the coast of the United States, this area has tremendous cultural value not only to residents, but to the populace at large. It is a worthy endeavor to protect this coastline and the natural resources of the nearshore environment for future generations and recognize the historic and cultural value of the area. I believe it will be an investment with high return should this proposed NMS be accepted and established.

If I can be of any further assistance in your decision, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Todd Z. Osborne PhD
Assistant Professor of Estuarine Biogeochemistry
Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience
University of Florida
9505 Ocean Shore Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL 32080
Ph. 904-461-4047 cell 352-256-3826s



August 29, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director;

The Marine Science Research Institute at Jacksonville University strongly endorses the nomination of the Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. The National Marine Sanctuaries Act protects nationally significant places and especially addresses the need for long-term protection of marine ecosystems and cultural resource. A National Marine Sanctuary designation would maintain and enhance the valuable marine habitat that includes the critically endangered population of the North Atlantic right whale, preserve and underline the significance of important fisheries habitat including the Oculina reef, the Matanzas River Basin, and the Indian River Lagoon Basin, and insure that significant maritime archeological material is managed and protected.

By identifying the nominated area to the public as one of enormous national significance worthy of conservation, a designation would provide the opportunity to establish a baseline for this biologically vital area and afford monitoring for anticipated changes due to human activities such as uninformed overuse, acoustic variables, climate change, and ocean acidification.

While local and state agencies may have overlapping regulations or other management authorities aimed at protecting specific marine resources, no other federal agency is directly mandated to comprehensively conserve and manage special areas of the marine environment like the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the nomination. The Marine Science Research Institute at Jacksonville University looks forward to the opportunity to work with the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries on the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. Quinton White, Jr.", written in dark ink.

A. Quinton White, Jr., Ph.D.
Executive Director



**The Florida State University
Coastal and Marine Laboratory**

3618 Coastal Highway St. Teresa, FL 32358-2702

Telephone: (850) 697-4120 Fax: (850) 697.3822

website: <http://www.marinelab.fsu.edu>



Mr. Daniel Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

1 September 2014

Dear Dan:

Having conducted research in marine protected areas for many years – from the Oculina Banks on the east coast to the Madison Swanson and Steamboat Lumps Marine Reserves, the Tortugas, and Pulley Ridge in the Gulf-- and as a member of the selection committee for the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve site, I fully embrace the proposal from *The Friends of Matanzas* to form *The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary*.

One of many advantages that this site has is that scientific research –the best available science -- demonstrates the critical value of the proposed sanctuary site to species ranging from whales to corals. It serves as calving grounds for the endangered North Atlantic right whale; as nesting habitat for the endangered leatherback, Kemp's ridley, and Atlantic green sea turtles, and the threatened loggerhead sea turtle; as spawning grounds for economically important fish species that are highly susceptible to overfishing; and as a primary site of deep-water *Oculina varicosa* habitat threatened by trawling.

In a time when NOAA strives to engage citizens in supporting its goal to restore the health and resiliency of marine systems, establishing this National Marine Sanctuary within the Southeastern U.S. Continental Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem clearly would help push this initiative forward. It will inspire local citizens to engage in the protection of the relatively undeveloped Matanzas River Basin and in the restoration of water quality and habitat (e.g., salt marsh and oyster reef) throughout the east coast of Florida, including the heavily eutrophied waters of the St. Johns River System. The potential to improve the capacity of this ecosystem to provide essential ecosystem services to the region is considerable.

I support this nomination with enthusiasm and without reservation.

Do let me know if I can be of any assistance.

With all best wishes,

Felicia C. Coleman, Ph. D.
Director

September 5, 2014

Dear Natural Marine Sanctuary Review Committee,

I am writing to provide my strong and enthusiastic support for an application submitted by the Friends of Matanzas in which they request formation of a National Marine Monument along the Southeastern U.S. Seaboard. This is a grass roots effort with much support from the citizens along the Florida and Georgia coasts. The formation of this National Monument will serve to protect some of the most endangered marine vertebrates in U.S. waters (e.g., sea turtles, manatees and right whales) and help ensure prolonged sustainability of a diverse and valuable set of shoreline communities, including oyster reefs, salt marshes, mangroves, seagrasses and offshore coral reefs.

The biodiversity and economic services generated by this array of ecosystems is among the highest along any U.S. coastline, yet in comparison to the New England and West Coast U.S. Shorelines, it receives the lowest amount of protection, especially in regards to marine protected areas. The establishment of this monument will immediately help correct this disparity and ensure that this disconnect does not widen.

The cultural history of this area is also among the richest in the U.S. and considered by many to be a national treasure. It includes one of the oldest cities in the U.S. – St. Augustine and is site to many historical and archeological sites of national and international interest. There are many state, local and federal agencies that manage small protected areas along this coastline, but their influence is limited and they do not have enough power to fully protect such icons as the endangered right whales whose expansive range necessitates a much larger conservation sphere.

The formation of a National Monument along Georgia and Florida coast will help unify and integrate conservation and resource management on these historical shorelines, solidify protection for critically endangered and iconic marine vertebrates, ensure that many historical U.S. treasures found in this area can be enjoyed by generations to come, and represent one of the best examples of grass-root establishment of national marine monument or national protected area. I give it my highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Brian Silliman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Silliman" clearly distinguishable.

Brian Silliman

Rachel Carson Associate Professor of Marine Conservation Biology
Division of Marine Science
Nicholas School of the Environment
Duke University

Mr. Daniel Basta
Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
sanctuary.nominations@noaa.gov

January 14th, 2015

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Greetings Mr Basta,

I am (still) the Director of the Whitney Lab for Marine Bioscience of the University of Florida located in the coastal town of Marineland approximately half way between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville. I wrote you a letter dated August 28, 2014 in support of the **Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary** initiative. I am writing today to reiterate my support for the revised application that you will evaluate in the very near future.

I would like to make clear that as Director, I am willing to donate office space and small boat access in support of the success of this endeavor. Our location will provide a critical base of operation for workers associated with the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary and foster numerous opportunities for various stakeholders (e.g. scientific, community, political, and commercial interests) to interact with one another for the greater good of our region. We have outstanding small conference/meeting facilities here at Whitney that will certainly facilitate these interactions.

If there is any additional information I can provide to demonstrate our support for this noble citizen-driven investment in our nations future, I urge you to contact me.

Sincerely,



Mark Q. Martindale, Ph.D.
Professor and Director
The Whitney Lab for Marine Bioscience
The University of Florida
9505 Oceanshore Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL
mqmartin@whitney.ufl.edu



MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

12 July 2011

The Honorable Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Undersecretary and Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW. Rm. 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

The Marine Mammal Commission recently learned that Dr. Michael J. Greenberg of the Friends of Matanzas, an environmental group in St. Augustine, Florida, has written to you requesting that a National Marine Sanctuary be established off the coast of northeastern Florida. Its goal would be to protect the region's archaeological and natural marine resources, including one of the world's most endangered of large whale species – the North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). Although the National Marine Fisheries Service has lead responsibility for conserving right whales and is addressing many of the species' research and management needs, experience with existing marine sanctuaries, such as the Stellwagen Bank and Hawaiian Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuaries, has shown that the authorities of the National Marine Sanctuary Program offer a highly effective and valuable means of supplementing and advancing the goals of whale conservation. Because waters off northeastern Florida, as well as southern Georgia, comprise the core of the only known calving ground currently used by North Atlantic right whales, the requested sanctuary designation would arguably include the single most important habitat for one of the world's most endangered large whales. For reasons noted below, the Marine Mammal Commission supports the petitioned action and recommends that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration vigorously pursue designation of coastal waters off northeastern Florida as well as southern Georgia as a National Marine Sanctuary whose purpose, in part, would be to conserve and promote the recovery of North Atlantic right whales.

North Atlantic right whales were nearly hunted to extinction by commercial whalers between the 11th century and the early 1900s. Recent abundance estimates suggest the population numbers 400 to 450 whales. With the possible exception of the North Pacific right whale (*E. japonica*) for which no reliable population estimate exists, this number makes North Atlantic right whales the most endangered large whale species and one of the most endangered mammals in the world. Studies over the past 35 years have revealed that virtually all North Atlantic right whale calves are born in or spend at least a portion of their first few months of life being nursed in waters within about 20 to 25 miles of shore, along a 90-mile stretch of coast from Matanzas Inlet in northeastern Florida to St. Simons Island, Georgia. Although waters out to about 15 miles along this stretch of coast were designated as critical habitat for right whales in 1994, we understand that the areas currently designated are under review by the National Marine Fisheries Service and that consideration will be given to extending its seaward boundary farther off shore because of the frequency of right whale sightings beyond the seaward boundary since 1994. The right whales that occur in this area are principally pregnant or nursing females, calves, and juveniles and they occur

there only during the calving season – generally from the beginning of December through the end of March. To provide a comprehensive approach for sanctuary management, we believe it would be appropriate for the sanctuary to encompass the entire core of the calving and nursery area, including all waters along this 90-mile stretch of coast out to 20 or 25 miles from shore.

The principal right whale conservation issues that sanctuary management could help address in this region are ship strikes, entanglement in commercial fishing gear, the need for additional research on habitat features critical to right whale calving and nursing, and the need to monitor calf production and early survival. To address ship collision risks, the entire 90-mile stretch of coast mentioned above has been included in a mandatory ship reporting system, which has been operated jointly by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Coast Guard since 1999. This system alerts ships to the presence of right whales and advises operators on ways to avoid them. The area also is subject to a seasonal 10-knot speed restriction pursuant to regulations adopted by the National Marine Fisheries Service in 2007. Mandatory reporting measures apply only to vessels 300 gross tons or larger, whereas speed limits apply only to vessels 65 feet in length or longer. The focus on large vessels was based on initial evidence suggesting that virtually all right whale deaths caused by vessel strikes involved large ships. Since then, however, smaller vessels (less than 300 gross tons and less than 65 feet) have also been documented to cause serious and possibly lethal injuries to right whales. Although some injuries have been reported directly by vessel operators, others have been documented from photographs of calves and identifiable adult females taken just a few days apart, showing the whales before and after receiving propeller scars from small vessels. Given this situation, sanctuary management, in coordination with the Fisheries Service and other involved parties, could provide valuable assistance with ongoing outreach efforts to ensure compliance with existing speed and reporting regulations, and it could expand efforts to reduce the risks of strikes by smaller vessels.

To address risks of entanglement in fishing gear, the Fisheries Service adopted regulations in 2006 prohibiting gillnet fishing in all of the waters along the 90-mile stretch of coast mentioned above. It also holds periodic meetings of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team to develop additional measures to reduce serious injuries and deaths incidental to commercial fishing and it funds efforts to disentangle whales found carrying fishing gear. These measures appear to be addressing fishery risks in the calving area effectively. Nevertheless, additional outreach efforts to fishermen and the additional eyes and assets that sanctuary designation could provide to detect and free entangled whales would be valuable.

Whale conservation also depends on research and monitoring to detect and assess problems and to evaluate the success of management actions. Although extensive research on right whales is currently being supported by the Fisheries Service and other agencies and organizations, many important efforts are underfunded or unfunded. Sanctuary designation and management also could provide assistance and support in several ways, including help with: (1) carcass detection, retrieval, and necropsies in the calving area, (2) tagging studies to better define behavior, habitat use, and movement patterns, (3) collection and analysis of tissue samples for genetic and biochemical studies, (4) aerial surveys to detect calves, monitor their condition, growth, and survival, and track changes in whale distribution, (5) monitoring compliance with regulations, and (6) identifying patterns in

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
12 July 2011
Page 3

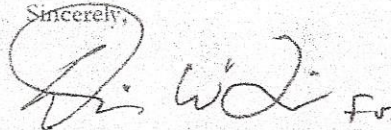
recreational boating and other vessel traffic. These are but a few of the many areas where further support for research and monitoring through sanctuary management could complement and improve ongoing work.

The designation of a marine sanctuary could also help address regional marine mammal research and management needs besides those related specifically to right whales. The most common species in the region's near-shore waters is the bottlenose dolphin, which suffers from interactions with both commercial and recreational fisheries and the effects of contaminants. Humpback whales and manatees also occur occasionally in ocean waters off northeastern Florida and southern Georgia, although the shallow sand flats that characterize most of the area are not considered as uniquely important to the populations of those species as they are to right whales.

Finally, we note that designation of coastal waters off northeastern Florida and southern Georgia as a marine sanctuary would complement, and in many ways help complete a regional system of protection that already includes several significant coastal protected areas established by state and federal agencies. The request by Friends of Matanzas to consider sanctuary designation identifies a number of these other areas along the northeastern Florida coast. By extending the designated area north into waters off southern Georgia, sanctuary management also could complement existing protection provided by the Cumberland Island National Seashore, which comprises almost the entire Georgia portion of the 90-mile shoreline stretch noted above.

In summary, the Marine Mammal Commission believes that designation of a national marine sanctuary containing the core of the North Atlantic right whale's calving and nursery ground and listing right whales as resources intended to benefit from sanctuary management would be a significant contribution to both (1) the conservation and recovery of the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, and (2) development of a more comprehensive regional network of marine and coastal protected areas. We therefore ask that you consider and act favorably on the Friends of Matanzas' proposal. If you or your staff have any questions, or if there is any way we can help in your consideration of this matter, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Boness', followed by the letters 'Fm'.

Daryl J. Boness, Ph.D.
Chairman

Cc: Daniel J. Basta, Ph.D.
Billy D. Causey, Ph.D.
Ms. Marcella Matthaci
George Sedberry, Ph.D.



Sent via email

August 26, 2014

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National
Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
dan.basta@noaa.gov; sanctuaries@noaa.gov

Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Rm 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Billy D. Causey, Regional Director
Southeast Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and
Caribbean Region
NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
33 East Quay Road
Key West, Florida 33040
Billy.Causey@noaa.gov

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am writing in support of the request of Friends of Matanzas, Inc. to establish a National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of St. Augustine, Florida, called The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. This designation is much needed to acknowledge and protect the region's biological and archaeological resources. A particularly critical aim is to provide consolidated management for the endangered North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). The waters off northeastern Florida are the some of the only known calving grounds used by the whales, and the expertise and oversight of the National Marine Sanctuary Program could offer additional conservation benefits.

The mission of the National Marine Sanctuaries Program is to conserve, protect, and enhance the biodiversity, ecological integrity, and cultural legacy of our nation's system of marine protected areas. The Secretary of the Department of Commerce is authorized to designate discrete areas of the marine environment as national marine sanctuaries to promote comprehensive management of their special conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, research, educational, or aesthetic resources. Designation of this area would surely be consistent with the mission of the National Marine Sanctuaries Program. For example, the area includes numerous submerged historic shipwrecks, the vital Crescent Beach submarine spring, and the Matanzas Inlet – the last undredged, unjettied inlet on Florida's Atlantic coast. Several studies of the area's ecology and biodiversity are ongoing, and designation of a sanctuary would also result in great conservation

benefits to breeding and nesting sea turtles and shorebirds, a variety of marine mammals, and especially to the nesting colony of least terns (*Sternula antillarum*) at the southern end of Anastasia Island, the largest such colony on Florida's Atlantic coast..

Almost all North Atlantic right whale calves are born in or spend a portion of their first few months of life nursing in waters about 20 to 25 miles off shore Florida, along a 90-mile stretch off the coast from Matanzas Inlet in northeastern Florida to St. Simon Island, Georgia. Sanctuary management of this area could help address ship strikes and entanglement in commercial fishing gear, and lead to additional research on habitat features critical to right whale calving and nursing and monitoring of calf production and early survival. Because sanctuaries can serve as secure habitat for species close to extinction – like the North Atlantic right whale – I encourage you to consider designating this area as a sanctuary. Bottlenose dolphins, humpback whales, and manatees could also benefit from this designation.

Furthermore, sanctuary designation and management could provide assistance on research and monitoring through (1) carcass detection, retrieval, and necropsies in the calving area; (2) tagging studies to better define behavior, habitat use, and movement patterns; (3) collection and analysis of tissue samples for genetic and biochemical studies; (4) aerial surveys to detect calves, monitor their condition, growth, and survival, and track changes in whale distribution; (5) monitoring compliance with regulations; and (6) identifying patterns in recreational boating and other vessel traffic. This research and monitoring will facilitate better management of this important marine resource and aid the Department of Commerce in achieving important Endangered Species Act recovery goals for the North Atlantic right whale, and potentially other imperiled species.

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity and its members, I fully support the creation of a National Marine Sanctuary off the northeast coast of Florida to conserve and promote the recovery of North Atlantic right whales. Thank you for your consideration of this very important designation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jaclyn Lopez', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jaclyn Lopez
Florida Attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity



Marine Resources Council, Inc.
3275 Dixie Highway, N.E.
Palm Bay, FL 32905
321-725-7775

April 13, 2015

Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a marine biologist who has been working to protect North Atlantic right whales for the last 16 years at the Marine Resources Council (MRC), a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental organization in Palm Bay, Florida (Brevard County). In addition to MRC's mission of protecting and restoring the Indian River Lagoon, we train and coordinate coastal volunteers to protect right whales from collisions with ships and help report entanglements to initiate rescue efforts off the east coast of Florida.

On behalf of the Marine Resources Council staff and more than 800 coastal volunteers on the Florida Atlantic coast, I am writing to express our support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

- 1. The North Atlantic right whale population likely had fewer than 100 individuals when it gained international protection in 1935. It's been 80 years, and the population stands at only about 500 today because of continued human impacts.**
- 2. Northeast Florida is the only known calving ground for North Atlantic right whales. For more than 30 years, with the exception of a rare stray mother, this is the only place North Atlantic right whales have been known to give birth. With roughly 70+ reproductively active females and calving intervals of a singleton birth every 3-5 years, it is critical that right whales are protected in northeast Florida during the calves' crucial first year of life.**
- 3. Ocean noise has been proven to cause chronic strain to right whales, as shown by hormone studies that proved there was reduced stress in right whales during the drastic reduction of shipping activity immediately following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. If ocean noise directly contributes to right whales' stress, then proposed seismic airgun blasts could likely be responsible for interfering with their immune system and reproduction, causing reduced communication and altered migratory patterns, behavior, migratory habits, feeding, and calving. If these blasts are going off every 10 seconds, 24 hours a day, there is no relief for them.**

4. **The current and proposed critical habitat areas for North Atlantic right whales do not protect them from seismic activity. The establishment of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary is the only way to protect right whales in their only known calving area.**

The Department of Interior's estimated 138,000+ whales and dolphins that will be sacrificed in the name of oil and gas exploration, many of which are endangered species and protected under the Marine Mammal Act, is appalling. If drilling is to take place off the Florida coast in the future, we also run the risk of oil spills in an area where the economy is quite dependent on its nature and tourism industry and the health of its beaches. Florida boasts the only known U.S. beaches for leatherback turtle nesting, the world's largest nesting aggregation for loggerhead turtles, and the second largest nesting aggregation for green sea turtles in the Western Hemisphere. Florida relies on clean beaches that welcome tourists for wildlife tours, birding, fishing, water sports, and more, and cannot afford the risk.

In addition, sanctuaries enhance recreational and commercial fishing. Fish populations must be allowed to repopulate themselves if the fishing industry is expected to sustain itself.

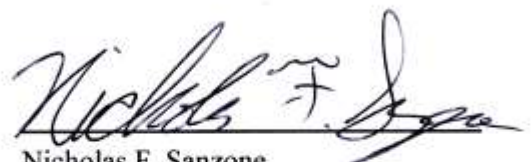
We would like the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary off the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration. The establishment of this National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

We respect and request protection of endangered right whales and other marine life and strongly desire the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary as protected habitat for the North Atlantic right whale and its calving grounds. Oil and gas exploration, wind farms, and sonar emit low-frequency sounds that affect right whales. A National Marine Sanctuary is the only thing that can protect right whales and other megafauna and marine life from offshore energy exploration.

Sincerely,



Julie A. Albert
Director, North Atlantic Right Whale Conservation Program



Nicholas F. Sanzone
Habitat Restoration Specialist



Dr. Leesa Souto
Executive Director



Maria Lombardo
Education Coordinator



Anne Mayer
Office Manager



Sent via email

August 28, 2014

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Dan.basta@noaa.gov ; sanctuaries@noaa.gov

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am writing to you today in support of the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary located off the coast of St. Augustine, Florida. As the Executive Director of the non-profit conservation group Eastman Environmental, I implore you to consider establishing this National Marine Sanctuary. Eastman Environmental is dedicated to protecting, restoring and conserving coastal and marine habitats through research, education and community involvement initiatives with a key focus on conserving and protecting the nesting and foraging habitat for marine turtles.

The northeast coast of Florida has remarkable biological, historical, economic and cultural significance. This proposed National Marine Sanctuary encompasses vital federally designated critical habitat for the highly endangered North Atlantic right whale. Additionally, the proposed area includes newly federally designated critical nearshore reproductive habitat for the threatened loggerhead sea turtle; nesting and foraging habitat for the endangered leatherback, Kemp's Ridley, and Atlantic green sea turtles; and economically significant fish habitat including the Oculina reef.

We believe a National Marine Sanctuary designation would sustain and enhance the critically endangered population of the North Atlantic right whale as well as preserve and emphasize the significance of important fisheries and protected marine turtles' habitat including the Oculina reef, the Matanzas River Basin, and the Indian River Lagoon Basin, and insure that maritime archeological material is managed and protected.

On behalf of Eastman Environmental and its members, I fully support the establishment of the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary off the northeast coast of Florida to aid in the recovery of the North Atlantic right whale, all species of protected marine turtles and significant maritime archeological relics. Thank you for your consideration of this very important designation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Eastman", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Scott F. Eastman
Executive Director, Eastman Environmental, Inc.



Keeping the Wild in Florida since 1936!

www.fwfonline.org

Manley K Fuller | President

P.O. Box 6870, Tallahassee, FL 32314-6870

2545 Blairstone Pines Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32301

Phone: (850) 656-7113

Fax: (850) 942-4431

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

September 3, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director;

On behalf of the Florida Wildlife Federation and our 60,000 supporters and members, I submit this letter strongly endorsing the nomination of the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. The National Marine Sanctuaries Act protects nationally significant places and especially addresses the need for long-term protection of marine ecosystems and cultural resources. A national marine sanctuary designation would maintain and enhance the valuable marine habitat that includes the critically endangered population of the North Atlantic right whale, preserve and underline the significance of important fisheries habitat including the Oculina reef, the Matanzas River Basin, and the Indian River Lagoon Basin, and insure that significant maritime archeological material is managed and protected.

By identifying the nominated area to the public as one of enormous national significance worthy of conservation, a designation would provide the opportunity to establish a baseline for this biologically vital area and afford monitoring for potential changes due to activities such as fisheries management, acoustic variables, climate change, and ocean acidification.

While local and state agencies may have overlapping regulations or other management authorities aimed at protecting specific marine resources, no other federal agency is directly mandated to comprehensively conserve and manage special areas of the marine environment like the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the nomination. The Florida Wildlife Federation strongly supports the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

Manley K Fuller, III, President



SIERRA CLUB FLORIDA
CONSERVATION ADVISORY TEAM
887 MARSHSIDE COURT
JACKSONVILLE BEACH, FL 32250
904-247-1876

Tom.Larson@Florida.SierraClub.org
<http://Florida.SierraClub.org>

March 10, 2015

Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary Proposal

Dear Mr. Basta,

I am chair of the Conservation Advisory Team of Sierra Club Florida and I live in Jacksonville Beach, Florida.

I am writing on behalf of the Sierra Club to express our full support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

Those of our 125,000 members and supporters in Florida who live on the Atlantic Ocean coast of north & central Florida are represented by Executive Committees of five (5) Groups along the coast, from Nassau County south to Palm Beach County, all of which have considered the matter and formally voted to support the proposal. Last weekend, the Florida Chapter Executive Committee voted to approve Florida Chapter support as well.

The designated area is prime calving and nursery grounds for the endangered North Atlantic Right Whale, supports important sea turtle habitat, as well as includes habitat for important underwater stands of Ivory Tree Coral, and part of the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern (designated by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council) is included in the proposed Sanctuary.

Further, ecotourism, including wildlife viewing and recreational saltwater fishing, is worth billions annually in the Florida economy and supports over 100,000 jobs.

We highly value conservation and population growth for the endangered right whales and strongly desire the highest protection of habitat for their calving grounds.

It is outrageous that BOEM would be allowed to accept that 138,000 marine mammals will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration by seismic airgun blasting, many of which fauna are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act.

This area of the east coast of Florida should be exempt from oil and gas exploration and development.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education, conservation, fishing and Florida's economy.

Sincerely,

Thomas C. Larson

copy: Friends of Matanzas



September 3, 2014
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing you in hope that you will consider adding our support for the creation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary (EONMS). As Indian Riverkeeper, I am responsible for the entire 156 miles of the Indian River lagoons from the Mosquito inlet north, to the Jupiter Inlet south. Once America's most diverse estuary, assaults from polluted waters and reductions in State protections have impacted our lagoon severely.

With six inlets communicating with the Atlantic Ocean and directly impacting the proposed NMS it is a concern that the billions of gallons of polluted water being forcibly discharged have and will continue to degrade and impact our offshore ecosystems. The two systems are inextricably connected, and danger to one, is a danger to both. This direct connection, and the dependency of our offshore ecosystems on our estuarine nurseries makes this partnership a win win for all.

I bring to the table the support of my organization and the resources of our dedicated advocates, one of which who has for many years been involved in Right Whale studies and disentanglement projects. I would be proud to be afforded the opportunity to join with our Matanzas Riverkeeper and others in support of these needed protections for Right Whales, Oculina Reefs and the their abundant specie which share inshore, offshore ecosystems.

We are ready to inform and engage our Community in support of this new NMS, and I am confident we can bring may interested parties to the discussion tables to help make this work. Many of the thousands of interested, and active advocates we work with along our Florida Coast are already aware of the need for better protections and are looking for a way to better protect our ever so important offshore ecosystems.

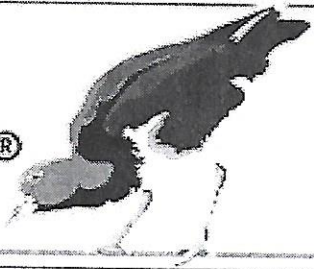
Thank you very much for your time, please feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions. The opportunity to create a meaningful legacy of protections for our children, and their children's future cannot be lost, please help us to bring this wonderful project to fruition.

Best!

Marty Baum
Indian Riverkeeper
772.631.5827

DEMAND CLEAN WATER

MATANZAS RIVERKEEPER®



August 26, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Sir or Madam,

I'm writing to you in my role as the Matanzas Riverkeeper (MRK) to add our support for the creation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary (EONMS).

The Matanzas River is a small river, 23 miles in length, but it is one of Florida's most culturally and ecologically important rivers. It begins, and ends, with inlets. The southern terminus of the River, the Matanzas Inlet, is one of the last remaining natural inlets on the east coast.

Because of its close proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, and its direct connection to the ocean, it is difficult to separate the health of the Matanzas from that of the Atlantic. Therefore, the health of the coastal zone is critical to the future of the Matanzas watershed.

Because of our concerns about the future health of Florida's East Coastal Zone, and the direct connection between the Atlantic and the Matanzas River, MRK is proud to support this nomination.

We offer our limited resources for a possible partnership with the proposed EONMS, and we will gladly share our limited office space, vessel time, and/or other resources to aid in the conservation and program development of the sanctuary. We also pledge to work within our community to garner support for the EONMS.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. We look forward to working with you and your staff to make the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary a reality.

For the Matanzas,

Neil A. Armingeon
Matanzas Riverkeeper



a nonprofit membership organization dedicated
to improving and protecting our coral reef ecosystem

Post Office Box 430, Key West, FL 33041 • reefrelief@gmail.com • www.reefrelief.org
Reef Relief Headquarters & Environmental Center 631 Greene Street, Key West, Florida • Tel: 305-294-3100 • Fax: 305-293-9515

February 5, 2015

Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am the Executive Program Director of Reef Relief, a 27 year old nonprofit organization based in Florida. Our work focuses on marine and water quality issues. I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

1) North Atlantic Right Whale, (*Eubalaena glacialis*)

The proposed sanctuary would protect an area of special significance for the critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whales. The sanctuary would help to protect and enhance critical areas of calving habitat. The rejection of the proposed sanctuary will leave U.S. Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Act protected species subject to impacts from shipping and oil and gas exploration. The small size of the remaining population of Northern Atlantic Right Whales make any potential impacts of serious concern

(2) Ivory Tree Coral, (*Oculina varicosa*)

The Ivory tree coral occurs in a discrete area along the central eastern Florida coast where, it forms massive colonies. These coral thickets support diverse populations of invertebrates and fin-fin. This area has been recognized as Oculina Habitat of Particular Concern. The proposed sanctuary includes this important habitat area.

(3) Sea Turtle Habitat

Within the proposed sanctuary is an area designed as critical habitat for the NW Atlantic Ocean District Population Segment of the loggerhead sea turtle. The area also, includes nearshore reproductive habitat, breeding and winter areas and migratory corridors for many sea turtles species.

(4) Fish Habitat and nursery areas

The proposed sanctuary would help to preserve the important fisheries habitat and nursery areas including the Oculina reef, the Mantanzas River and the Indian River Lagoon Basins. The proposed sanctuary would provide needed resources to manage these ecologically and economically important areas.

(5) Strong local dependence on tourism revenue generated largely for natural resource dependent activities

The communities of South Florida like many others around the globe rely on revenue generated from coasts and ocean. The majority part of local economy relies on tourism and the fishing industry. The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary will help to insure the future of Florida's coastal communities.

In conclusion, Reef Relief urges the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries to extend the additional protection to the proposed area proposed as the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

Millard McCleary
Executive Program Director
Reef Relief
P.O. 430
Key West, FL 33041
reefrelief@gmail.com

***Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol Inc.
4738 S. Peninsula Drive
Ponce Inlet, FL 32127
seaturtlepatrol@bellsouth.net***

September 10, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director:

The Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol is a non-profit organization that protects the threatened and endangered sea turtles nesting on the beaches of Volusia, Flagler and St. Johns counties. We mark and monitor all sea turtle nests and rescue sick and injured turtles. This includes loggerheads, green turtles, leatherbacks and the very rare kemp's ridley. The loggerhead sea turtles that nest on these beaches are a genetically distinct population not found south of Volusia County and are therefore crucial to the genetic diversity of Florida's sea turtle population.

The ocean, beaches and estuaries these turtles call home are critical to their survival and need to be protected. It has often been said that the health of the marine animals is a good indication of the overall health of our oceans. The decline in sea turtle health and the rise in sea turtle mortalities are disturbing.

We respectfully request your consideration to create the proposed sanctuary for this area to help preserve our precious natural resources.

Sincerely,

Beth Libert
President
Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol

29 August 2014

566 Ponoka St

Sebastian, FL 32958

Mr. Daniel Basta

Director, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

1305 East West Highway, N/NMS

Silver Spring, Md 20910

Dear Mr. Basta,

I have been made privy to a proposed sanctuary nomination submittal for an area from Jacksonville to Fort Pierce Florida. I believe the application has merit, and I strongly support, and recommend, its selection for consideration. I believe the habitat protection for endangered species, as well as archeological site protection in the designation merits very strong consideration of the application. The fact it will encompass and join areas already managed as a Marine Protected Area (SAFMC North Florida MPA), an extant Sanctuary (Gray's Reef), and a Habitat of Particular Concern (Oculina Bank) (and continuation to the north and south of that mapped, but currently unprotected, unique deep water coral habitat) is also an important consideration.

The need for designation in part is strongly justified by the need for the expansion of Right whale calving habitat. The species though endangered, and thought to be unrecoverable by some, is of extreme importance and has shown a recent uptick in recruitment; perhaps resultant from the measures put in place by the take reduction team and wide mariner whale notice publicity on NOAA nautical weather radio. It would be shameful to squander potential gains by not closing the loop on important habitat protection, perhaps dooming those very animals saved by other actions.

A concern I have, which has been addressed to the applicants (and I am assured they understand), is the need for a complete, and specific, explanation of a strong NEED and PURPOSE. The benefits to habitat, endangered species, and archeological sites afforded and derived by sanctuary designation must be addressed in detail with citations. As well, specifics with regard to regulation of activities within the sanctuary must be spelled out in detail, with the intent to allay protests from groups already engaged in some form of management within the area. Assured all will be done, I believe this application has merit, is significant to the sanctuary program, and again strongly recommend its approval for consideration.

signed

Captain George J Geiger

Chairman, Marine Protected Area Federal Advisory Committee

Past SAFMC Council Member and Chairman

Past Chairman Costal Conservation Association Florida

Sarah W. Bailey



Dear Sanctuary Nomination Committee, NOAA:

RE: Proposed *Eubalaena Oculina* National Marine Sanctuary

As a St. Johns County Commissioner from 1984 to 1992, I worked with diverse teams of citizens concerned about ocean protection. From promoting sea turtle nesting season lighting reduction regulations—that became popular with coastal residents—to working on approval of the GTMR NERR after I retired, I've remained in close contact with many residents from Amelia to Anastasia.

Sea mice, grasses, migratory birds, reptiles, manatees, forage fish, mollusks and our extraordinary North Atlantic right whales are all scientifically documented as threatened or endangered due to ocean habitat infringement in our immediate area. The people who live in Northeast Florida and our abundant tourist population have always been concerned with preserving our irreplaceable wildlife and coastal and estuarine habitats.

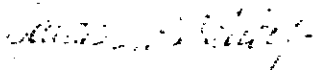
Our Matanzas Basin Pass is one of the last (if not the very last) unspoiled passes on Florida's east coast. Were an observation tower to be erected on county-owned Rattlesnake Island to assist public education, people could see multiple interrelated ecosystems in one panoramic turn: oceanfront; beachfront; primary, secondary and tertiary dunes and dunal swales; ICW, and uplands on the mainland. From working with the Sea Grant Program and the Whitney Marine Fisheries Laboratory, I've met even more concerned citizens of all ages, many of whom are often engaged in the highest level of coastal research.

Sound ocean and oceanfront preservation management, well into our future, will simultaneously preserve our unique underwater archeological history that occurred in these precise locations, deserving the highest level of environmental and historical protection from Fort Clinch to Merritt Island. As St. Augustine celebrates its 450th, the time to preserve our ocean habitat from further development and pollution has never been more critical.

Even as far back as the 1960s, when I taught 6th grade, my students were learning about environmental degradation issues including that sonar harms whales and marine wildlife. Sonar damage was common knowledge among 12 year olds. I also believe every aspect of a National Marine Sanctuary will enhance our economy in Northeast to Central Florida and that no economic downturn will occur should industry be prohibited or much more carefully regulated in our corner of the Atlantic.

A National Marine Sanctuary will ensure increased future protection and better management than currently exists. It is crucial we make changes for preservation to take place: continuous changes in people's habits, continuous education, and continuous funding for independent scientific observation and analysis. Please give this nomination your highest support.

Sincerely,



Sarah W. Bailey



P. Brendan Burke

August 28, 2014

Mr. Daniel Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary Proposal

Dear Mr. Basta

I am writing you to express my support for the creation of the Eubaleana Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. There are several points which I would like to elucidate that, I believe, strongly argue for a sanctuary in the waters off northeast Florida.

a. Shipwreck Protection

My background is as a trained maritime archaeologist and I have worked for the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum since 2007 as such. In this capacity, and as a citizen of St. Augustine, there has been much I have learned about the history of this area. Singularly, the depth of maritime connection to St. Augustine and northeast Florida is unparalleled anywhere else in the United States. As our nation's oldest port, St. Augustine has hosted oceangoing merchants, warships, and ships of exploration for almost 450 years. This traffic has led to loss of ship, and life, off our coast for nearly half a millennia. Thus, local waters hold one of the most comprehensive and vital building blocks to our nation's history. It is therefore important that we protect these wrecks from treasure hunting, salvaging, and looting. Historic shipwrecks are a nonrenewable resource and part of our shared past. Similarly, they are often gravesites that deserve respect and attention due this type of site. Removing, for profit, these wrecks and/or their cargoes is simply unethical. I therefore wholly support a national marine sanctuary whose mission it is to implement, clearly and with intent to enforce, the complete prohibition of treasure hunting, so-called 'commercial archaeology', salvaging of shipwrecks over fifty years old, and any other activity that willingly disturbs submerged cultural heritage.

The Thunder Bay NMS has established a precedent for wreck protection that works, and ensures the dissemination of knowledge about Great Lakes shipping and commerce. Florida has long been home to treasure hunting, as the name 'Treasure Coast' implies, and is therefore most at risk to lose pieces of our past to profit-seeking companies. A marine sanctuary located here off Florida could serve to expand protection to a wider area, and introduce more people to the story of humans and the sea. Furthermore, the sanctuary would join a presently-existing state shipwreck preserve in St. Augustine's

offshore waters (<3nm), an initiative taken by Florida in 1968 to recognize some of the most at-risk areas for shipwrecks and submerged cultural heritage.

b. Maritime History

Northeast Florida is responsible for the development of the commercial shrimping industry and supplying it with the bulk of the shrimp trawlers during the heyday of commercial shrimp fishing. Commercial shrimping here is much diminished from what it was decades ago but it nonetheless perseveres as part of our culture. While the industry has certainly created environmental issues, many great strides have been made to lessen the fishery's impact on local fish and turtle populations. This balance of human versus environmental needs, which has become more and more popularly understood as a single, entwined need, has largely been met by combining the science of the oceans with the science of fishing. As such, we continue to celebrate ever-increasing numbers of successful sea turtle nests on our local beaches and higher recruitment numbers for some species of fish as bycatch numbers reduce.

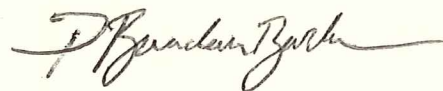
While shrimping history is only a portion of our local maritime history it is one of the most important. Shrimping and trawler building changed local economies and affected distant economies. Trawlers left Florida's coast to begin fleets in over 23 foreign countries on every continent except Antarctica. This may not seem like fodder for the creation of a marine sanctuary but we have to include all parts of our maritime history here in order to understand where we are, and where we want to go. I am in support of a Eubaleana Oculina National Marine Sanctuary that incorporates not only this history into its management plan, but actively seeks the participation of the shrimp industry to increase its sustainability for man and fish alike.

c. Cetaceans

Having spent a considerable portion of my professional and personal time on or by the sea, I somehow never saw a whale until December 17th, 2010. While off St. Augustine aboard our research vessel, it happened. A mother and calf right whale surfaced to breath only a couple hundred feet away. They were joined by a third whale and it was that moment that I realized how much they have filled our lives with their presence in literature, in history, and in our environment. Similarly, I realized how very empty the oceans would be without them. Protection for right, and other, whales has increased without a doubt during the past fifty years but we can afford to do more since we cannot afford to lose them. For this reason I support the creation of a Eubaleana Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

For the above reasons, and many more, I hope you consider the establishment of a national marine sanctuary in the waters of north Florida. As our population grows, and coastal populations become more dense, we must rely on staunch conservation methods to enjoy a healthy environment for ourselves as well as leaving a lasting legacy of healthy oceans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Brandon Barth", with a stylized, flowing script.

Environmental Youth Council of St. Augustine Florida
7000 Charles Street
St. Augustine, FL 32080

August 28, 2014

Director Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Madam or Sir,

Environmental Youth Council of St. Augustine, Florida, is an association of citizens concerned with environmental and social issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. We work to bridge the gap between those who are concerned with those who are in action and working on solutions. Our goal is to engage all people and organizations in finding viable solutions to the emerging environmental crisis.

We endorse the creation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary as one of those viable solutions.

The declining health and productivity of the Atlantic marine environment is troubling to us. Additional developing threats include the growing list of federally listed endangered species, and the proposed permitting of seismic testing and off shore drilling.

We urge you to consider this application favorably.

Thank you.



Hunter Miller
Environmental Youth Council
St. Augustine, Florida



Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
sanctuary.nominations@noaa.gov

August 28th, 2014

Re: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Greetings Director,

I am currently the Director of the Whitney Lab for Marine Bioscience of the University of Florida, located in the coastal town of Marineland approximately half way between Daytona Beach and Jacksonville.

As I am sure you know, the Northeast Coast of Florida is one of the least spoiled coastlines in the United States and is an important resource for gaining a better scientific understanding of the origins and stability of biological diversity, particularly in reference to the sustainable stimulation of outdoor recreation, tourism, and a variety of marine fisheries that are all a part of the high quality of life in our region.

In addition to being a unique estuarine interface, our coastline provides critical habitat for a number of species, including calving grounds for the federally designated highly endangered North Atlantic right whale, as well as the leatherback, Kemp's Ridley, and Atlantic green sea turtles which nest along our beaches. The estuaries that feed the intercoastal waterway system as well as the deep water Oculina coral reef system that runs out to the Continental shelf from Daytona to Ft. Pierce Florida provides important breeding ground for commercial and recreational fisheries.

By recognizing the nominated area as one of enormous national significance worthy of conservation for the long-term protection of marine ecosystems and cultural resources, a National Marine Sanctuary designation would provide the opportunity to establish a baseline for this biologically vital area and allow our nation to scientifically monitor anticipated changes due to human activities such as uninformed overuse, acoustic variables, climate change, and ocean acidification.

For these reasons, I support the establishment of the **Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary**. The proposal was put together by a large number of highly qualified and concerned citizens and outlines a compelling case for its existence of this federal entity that will not only protect the important fisheries habitat including the Oculina reef, the Matanzas River Basin, and the Indian River Lagoon Basin but provide important habitat for endangered animals (e.g.

whales and sea turtles) that our children and their children's children will be able to experience well into the future. The Northeast coast of Florida is truly a unique part of our history and national identity. It deserves to be protected at the federal level, and I urge you to utilize the full force of your office to establish the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,



Mark Q. Martindale, Ph.D.
Professor and Director
The Whitney Lab for Marine Bioscience
The University of Florida
9505 Oceanshore Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL
mqmartin@whitney.ufl.edu



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Letter of support for the Eubalaena Oculina NMS

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Tue, Mar 24, 2015 at 7:40 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 7:37 PM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Letter of support for the Eubalaena Oculina NMS

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Maggie Allen** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Fri, Mar 20, 2015 at 6:15 PM

Subject: Letter of support for the Eubalaena Oculina NMS

To: EUBALINA@gmail.com

March 20, 2015

Dan Basta,

Director

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program

1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a master's student in Marine Affairs, and I was born and raised in central Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because this ocean deserves long-standing protection. The Florida coastline inspired my love of the ocean and pushed me on



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Tue, Mar 24, 2015 at 7:40 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 7:36 PM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **holly thompson** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Sat, Mar 21, 2015 at 4:34 PM

Subject: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

To: "Eubalina@gmail.com" <Eubalina@gmail.com>

Director

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

1305 East-West Highway

11th Floor

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Director,

I am writing to encourage you to support the nomination of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. I am a native Floridian and a practicing Psychotherapist in the Jacksonville/St. Augustine area. It has been my experience, both personally and professionally, that access to our (clean) beaches and coastal waters can have significant benefits for one's mental well-being.

As acre after acre of land is developed in Florida, the ability to find refuge and balance in nature is becoming more and more difficult. We in Florida can at least stand on our beaches and look outward to our vast ocean and have a sense of (re)connecting with the natural world. There are immeasurable benefits to this and I firmly oppose putting this area in jeopardy. I cannot support the continued (short sighted) exploration for oil and gas at

any cost. I don't consider a known (under)estimate of more than 138,000 marine mammals, victimized due to stress induced from seismic air-gun blasting, an acceptable cost.. This of course doesn't even factor in the other marine vertebrates and invertebrates that inhabit the oceans. Nor does it consider the migratory life of many of these animals.

Sincerely,

Holly Thompson-Smoyer

Licensed Mental Health Counselor

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.

www.avast.com

my career path to ensure its protection and equitable use. My parents owned a condo on Flagler beach, where I hold valuable memories of my late mother and I splashing in the waves and enjoying the sea.

As someone studying the human dimensions of marine resources, national marine sanctuaries are not only critical for ecological reasons, but economic and social as well. The cultural artifacts in this area tell human's history in the region and should be protected for further study and understanding. These beaches are also critical for Northeast Florida's economy and support important fish stocks and habitats. A marine sanctuary would sustain these invaluable resources for generations to come.

The first attempt at nomination failed because NOAA believed there was not enough identified community support, and I believe this is something the residents of St. Augustine and other affected communities can improve. If presented with the right amount of information, a diverse group of Florida residents would support this marine sanctuary, given its ability to enhance recreational and commercial fisheries, help the economy, and create educational opportunities.

I hope my letter of support is helpful, and please do consider this beautiful area to become a NMS. Florida faces significant amount of pressures from an accelerating population growth to climate change to sea level rise, and a sanctuary would help mitigate these threats. My ultimate goal is that one day I can enjoy these waters with my future children and grandchildren just as I did with my mother, and they can carry those priceless memories with them throughout their lives.

Sincerely,

Maggie Allen

Master's Candidate, UW School for Marine and Environmental Affairs '16



This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.
www.avast.com



February 9, 2015

Mr. Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Mr. Basta:

As a life-long resident of St. Augustine, Florida, I am deeply concerned about the future health of the Atlantic Ocean. Accordingly, I'm writing to express my support for the Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

Establishing this Sanctuary is important to the future health of Florida's tourist and marine economy. The area within the proposed sanctuary will enhance our tourist-based economy, opportunities for marine archeology which helps tell the story of our historic past, and enhance commercial and recreational fishing.

The Sanctuary would prevent seismic testing proposed for the Mid and South Atlantic areas. This testing would cause irreparable damage to marine ecosystems in shallow water, including the beaches from which Northeast Florida depends for its tourist based economy. It would require additional study and safeguards prior to permitting any offshore oil drilling in the Atlantic. Given the environmental disaster caused by BP and Transocean during the Deepwater Horizon incident less than 5 years ago, it is unconceivable that the US would consider expanding deep water drilling to the Atlantic.

I join many others in encouraging your careful review of the Sanctuary's application, it's support among a large number of elected officials, businesses and citizens from North and Central Florida.

Sincerely,

Doug Wiles, CPCU
President

400 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd. • St. Augustine, FL 32084-3587
904-829-2201 • fax 904-829-2020 • 800-997-1961
www.herbiawiles.com

The House That Trust Built



56-A San Marco Avenue, St. Augustine, FL 32084 PH: 904 460 2248

September 1, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Sir or Madam,

I'm writing to express my full support of the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. I only recently became aware of the effort, but I must say I was thrilled to hear about it.

I have owned a professional photography business in St. Augustine for 24 years, and just last year opened a retail store/gallery in downtown St. Augustine featuring imported furniture, décor, and my photography.

More and more, we're learning that visitors to Florida are more interested in history, culture, and pristine natural surroundings rather than the next Disney-like tourist attraction. I can't tell you how often I hear tourists remark on the unspoiled beauty of our corner of northeast Florida, and that observation is nearly always based on our coastal environment. Healthy waterways, beaches and oceans are critical to keeping this economic engine running.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a wonderful tool to help us preserve and also promote our rich maritime history, cultural resources, and most of all, the incredible marine ecosystems of northeast Florida and its adjacent ocean waters.

I hope you'll do what you can to lead us in the effort to create a National Marine Sanctuary we can call our own. As a business owner and lifelong resident of the state of Florida, I know it's the right thing to do.

Sincerely,

Walter Coker

Coastal Traders
Coker Photographics

Genung's Fish Camp Inc.
291 Cubbedge Rd
St Augustine, FL 32080
August 29, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Director:

I am a resident and business owner in St Augustine and have lived on or close to the Matanzas River for many years. I would like to extend my full support for the creation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary (EONMS).

While the North East Coast is home to our oldest city, it is also a very important habitat for endangered sea turtles and whales.

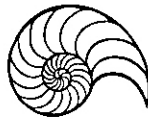
As a concerned resident, fisherman, and a business owner who depends on the protection these vital areas, I feel that the proposed creation of the EONMS is the only way to effectively manage these areas with a clarity and purpose that local and federal agencies cannot.

Please accept my thanks for the opportunity to be heard. I look forward to the creation of this sanctuary and am happy to extend my support in the future.

Sincerely,



Stephen Woodard
Genung's Fish Camp Inc.



Synergy

ASSET STRATEGIES, INC.

Your Money + Your Values = Prosperity Your Way

February 3, 2015

Dan Basta,
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

My name is Helen Rake and I am a native of St. Augustine, Florida. My husband is also a native and we've raised our children in our hometown as well. Our ancestors were among the original Minorcan settlers. In addition, I own an investment firm here in St. Augustine.

Needless to say, I have a vested interest in this community and its well-being on multiple levels.

I'm writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

1. Recently I discovered that not only do right whales visit our local Atlantic waters, which are part of the proposed Sanctuary, but they actually calve here. What a privilege! I believe the proposed marine sanctuary will help protect these endangered whales and their calving grounds for future generations.
2. As a recreational boaters and fishermen that consider our local Atlantic and intracoastal waters among the best natural resources we possess, we wish to maintain its beauty and improve its health and the health of the many species of fish and wildlife that call our waters home.

We hope our children and children's children will be able to enjoy the same healthy 'salt life' that we currently enjoy. Stress melts away when we're on the water. Our family bonds on the water like no other time. Our kids even leave their electronics behind to fish, swim and come together with other family and friends out on the local islands. The fish and shellfish we catch improve our diets and our health. I value the Atlantic's contribution to my family's overall well-being and hope to see it protected for other families like mine.

3. As a local business owner, this sanctuary seems like a no-brainer. It is likely to bring even more tourism to northeast Florida. More money in the local economy usually leads to more small businesses, jobs and a healthier community. It could also attract other related industries, educational institutions, and residents to add to the tax base. As I said, economically it's a no-brainer.

As a native, forever linked to this locale in innumerable ways, it's important to note that the area covered by the proposed sanctuary also contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of **our** history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

It's outrageous to think that 138,200 mega fauna could be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act. The damage this exploration could do to our hometown fisheries which contribute so much to our local economy is unfathomable to my family, especially those of us that make a living fishing local waters.

I believe a solution to this problem is the Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary which as you know will actually enhance recreational and commercial fisheries. The Florida Keys are a wonderful example of this important fact.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration and the desolation that could accompany it. I believe that a National Marine Sanctuary would not only stop this from happening but would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy and hope that you will consider my family and all those we represent when making this decision.

I encourage you to approve this proposal quickly to protect our lifestyle and what makes Florida THE destination for many around the world, but more importantly for the locals to which Florida IS the world.

Thank you for your consideration in this very important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Helen M. Rake', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Helen M. Rake, President



Landscape & Irrigation Contractors • Nursery & Garden Center
1690 A1A South, St. Augustine, FL 32080 • 904/471-0440 • Fax 904/460-1222

August 26, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Madam or Sir,

I am writing to endorse the creation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

I am a lifetime resident/stakeholder of Florida, a local business owner including, among other ventures, a partnership in a local fish camp/marina, a lifetime fisherman, an oyster lease owner and a longtime resident of the barrier island Anastasia Island.

The decline in the health of the local marine environment, including the loss of marine productivity, the listing of federally endangered species endemic to this area, and the future threat to marine health from proposed seismic testing and offshore drilling are compelling reasons to support this effort.

Any considerations you could offer would be appreciated.

Best regards.

Bill Hamilton
Southern Horticulture
St. Augustine, Florida

SOUTHERN REALTY
OF ST. AUGUSTINE AND CRESCENT BEACH

August 29, 2014

Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in support of the creation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

St. Augustine is celebrating its 450th anniversary next year, as the oldest occupied European settlement in the United States. There is a rich multicultural history with obvious remnants everywhere, including the bottom of the sea. The Gullah/Geetchee escaped the English by boat, to the Spanish colonies, and the French Fleet of Jean Ribault was wrecked attempting an attack on St. Augustine. Indigenous people traveled the gulfstream in large dugouts. And supply ships from the Spanish, the Confederates, and early America, litter the sea floor.

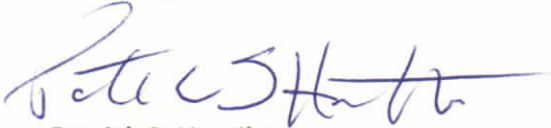
As rich as the maritime history is, the biology of Coastal North Florida is equally significant. The endangered Right Whale, Loggerhead and Atlantic Green Turtles are a common site for residents. The sanctuary statutes should enhance measures to sustain their populations. The first magnitude spring (submarine) off Crescent Beach has been flagged by the US Geological Survey as a possible midden site. And the deep water corrals of the Oculina Bank are thousands of years old and provide habitat for migratory and native species.

Species and special places are disappearing worldwide. We need a structure to preserve and protect that which is important. A National Marine Sanctuary could provide this for coastal northeast Florida.

I have grown up here, and I surf and fish at the Matanzas Inlet on a daily basis. I built my office, Southern Realty, in 1987 and sell homes, businesses and land to people who come here because of the environmental vibrancy and historical significance.

A National Marine Sanctuary could provide a forum for those of us who live and work here to come together and plan for the future. I wholeheartedly support the Eubalaena Oculine National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick S. Hamilton", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick S. Hamilton
Owner/Broker



08/27/2014

My name is Captain Zach McKenna and I am the owner and operator of an environmental education company known as, St. Augustine Eco Tours, Inc. We offer on-water education experiences to local residents and visitors to northeast Florida via kayaks, powerboats, and sailboats. St. Augustine Eco Tours employs a staff of fifteen Interpretive Naturalists who are trained as United States Coast Guard Captains or professional kayak guides. The goal of this organization is conservation through education and we focus our efforts on the unique estuaries and near coastal waters surrounding St. Augustine, Florida.

The purpose of this letter is to support the establishment of a **National Marine Sanctuary** in the waters of northeast Florida. I believe that a NMS in this region would bring awareness and local management to critical habitats and submerged artifacts.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Zach McKenna', is positioned below the 'Thank you,' text.

Zach McKenna

DEC 7, 2014

Gloria O. Polson

DAN BASTA, Dir. of the Office of NAT'L MAR. SANC.

RE: THE EUBALAEIA OCA LINA NAT'L
MARINE SANCTUARY

DEAR DIRECTOR Basta,

I am a FLORIDA resident and I live
in Eekton, FL. --- @ 20 min from the
Ocean. & am writing to express my
support for the proposed Marine
Sanctuary. The reasons are obvious
& warrant protection of endangered
right whales & strongly desire any
action which would ensure
those rights!

I appreciate any & all of your
efforts in this regard as
I am sure many of my fellow
Florida residents do.

Sincerely,
Gloria O. Polson

2-4-15

Dan Basta, Dir.
Office of National Marine Sanctuary Program

Dear Mr. Basta

I am writing to support the
proposed Eubaelena Oculina National
Marine Sanctuary.

We must protect our wildlife,
our estuaries, and the fragile
coastline of this area. Right
whales are endangered, and
once gone cannot be replaced.
Other species in that area are
supposed to be protected under
the Marine Mammal Act-

This is a beautiful area.
Destroying it or any other fragile
ecosystem to look for a fossil
fuel is an out dated idea -
we need to move on from
that.

Destroying this area so that some
oil company CEO in a suit, on
the 10th floor of a building many
miles away, can meet his
company's profit goals is a
really dumb idea.

We need more whales - fewer
CEO's

Sincerely
Paige Slade

What world do you
want for your
children and
grandchildren?

March 11, 2015

Director Daniel Basta
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, NOAA
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-713-7235
dan.basta@noaa.gov

Dear Director Basta,

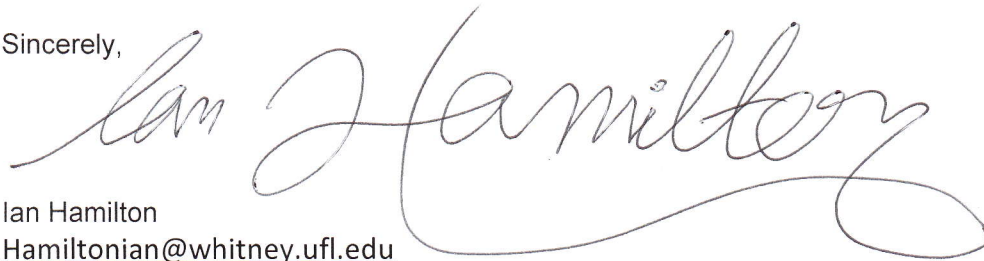
I write to you in support of the Eubalaena-Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. As a native Floridian of three generations, I am deeply ingrained in the constituency. Having grown up eating fish and oysters, I can tell you that my culture depends on their survival, on the health of the ecosystem. We depend on the ocean and rivers for our livelihood. The land, rivers, and sea comprise a complex interconnected system, one which demands responsible stewardship.

The remaining pristine areas are now endangered by seismic testing for oil. Such activities would only accelerate destruction of our natural resources, and should be avoided at all cost. No amount of money or business structure should be allowed to stand against preserving the natural gems we have left. I grew up surfing at the Matanzas inlet, and have traveled extensively through Florida looking for waves, thus I can tell you that the natural beauty of the coastline is exemplified here like nowhere else in the state. My work now, at the Whitney Laboratory, continuously reinforces this view.

Sadly, greed in the political strata does not prioritize dolphins and whales. We cannot stand aside while business interests threaten us. The environment is not just the world around us, we ourselves are a part of it. Addressing the issue is to focus on renewable energy techniques, to stop bleeding the earth dry of oil, to work at meeting the demands of our changing climate. Such short-sighted greed has rejected scientific consensus, denying that 'climate change' exists. What we need now is a change in the social climate, a change in the political climate. Hopefully, we can accept that our actions have a real impact.

The proposed Eubalaena-Oculina National Marine Sanctuary is a step forward in protecting our natural world. It does not allow drilling, nor seismic testing. In effect, these creatures would maintain access to their breeding grounds, and avoid being subjected to severe acoustic confusion. In addition, it would reinforce societal progress towards a harmonious future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Ian Hamilton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Ian Hamilton
Hamiltonian@whitney.ufl.edu

March 7, 2015

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am writing in support of the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. In careful consideration, I find that this designation will provide additional resources for education, stewardship and conservation for the northeast Atlantic Ocean and the life that it supports.

My role in the community has been educating the public about the importance of an estuary and the coastal systems to include the ocean. I live near the Matanzas Inlet, and live within the Matanzas Basin and the GTM NERR. I have a family and love the opportunity of raising my family along this pristine stretch of coastline and wetland ecosystem.

We are fortunate to see the ocean and the estuary on a daily basis from both personal and community perspectives. We have seen the negative impacts by human behavior on these ecosystems. We have also seen the positive impacts by federal, state and local agencies working together to provide awareness, research, education and enforcement. We find that the continued efforts to support the collaboration and unity of governmental agencies, non-profits, and private industries will enhance the sustainability of the natural resources for northeast Florida; I find this collaboration for the natural resources to be a critical component for all life and the future.

I also find that the proposed NMS should not impede or take away financial resources from existing federal, state and/or local agencies. As an example, I do not support negative impacts to the GTM NERR and I have not found this to be a concern within the NMS proposal.

I also want to ensure that job loss is not a result of this NMS designation, and/or loss of resources that benefit the surrounding community. We live in an area that relies heavily on this healthy estuarine system and healthy ocean. I do not wish to prevent anyone from fishing in a sustainable practice and/or regulating their ability to fish. I do support the ability to use science to help identify habitats to include spawning areas that need protection during designated time periods.

We appreciate the sensitivity of this issue and thank you for your time.



Eric Ziecheck



05 February 2015

Dan Basta,
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a current Florida resident since 1985, and I live in St. Augustine, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

We need to protect endangered species and protect the environment for future generations.

As well, we need to exhibit morality, not greed.

I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds.

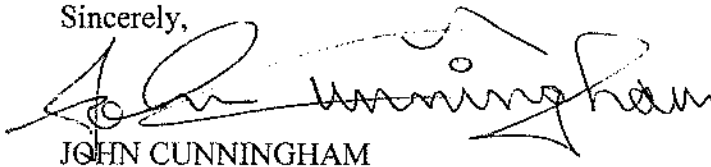
The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration.

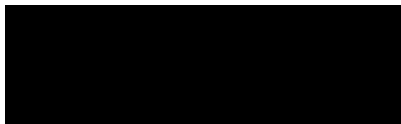
A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries enhance recreational and commercial fishing.

Sincerely,



JOHN CUNNINGHAM



February 1, 2015

Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta:

I am a native Floridian, grew up in South Florida, resided in St. Augustine, Florida since 1980 and currently still own property with my family in Florida as well as North Carolina. My concern is for coastal Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the Proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

The Atlantic Coastal area that is under threat of seismic testing and future oil and gas exploration will unquestionably be at the sacrifice of numerous marine animal species.

We need to protect, not threaten all life forms.
We need to change how we view our environment for future generations.
We need to stand stronger than the influence of money.
We need to exhibit morality not greed.
WE NEED TO CHANGE.

Please PROTECT the east coast of Florida from gas and oil exploration and make an effort to educate people toward protecting our earth, not destroying it. I urge you to establish a National Marine Sanctuary to achieve this.

Sincerely,



Pat Webb



Laura R. Warren and Edward F. Warren



February 3, 2015

Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Springs, Maryland 20910

We would like to express our support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. As long time residents of NE coastal Florida we appreciate the natural beauty of the ocean and wish to insure that it remain as pristine as possible for future generations. Our reasons for establishing the sanctuary include but are not limited to:

1. Safeguarding the habitat and calving grounds of the endangered right whales.
2. Prohibiting the Sonic Boom oil-gas exploration testing that endangers all marine animals.
3. Exempting this area from oil and gas exploration.
4. Preserving the maritime archeological history of the area.

The natural beauty of Florida attracts millions of visitors to our state each year and the establishment of the Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary would be a major step in insuring the health of these natural resources for years to come.

Please contact us if you require further information.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura R. Warren".

Laura R. Warren

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward F. Warren".

Edward F. Warren

cc: US Congressman Ron DeSantis, 6th District Florida
US Senators, Florida, Rubio and Nelson
Florida Governor Scott

Cory Carter



Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to endorse the creation of the Proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. I am a native Floridian, and resident of Martin County for many years, who believes we must be good stewards of our environment.

The impact of the proposed Atlantic seismic exploration for offshore oil and gas drilling will negatively impact all marine wildlife, including Right whales, sea turtles, and other endangered and migrating sea creatures. Underwater seismic waves carry for thousands of miles -- and emit deafeningly loud blasts of noise, seriously hurting marine animals that depend on their hearing for survival. Loss of marine productivity is already a concern in our seas. Tourism, fishing, both commercial and recreational, along Florida's east coast, would be negatively impacted by the results of seismic testing.

Any support you can provide towards the creation of the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary will be greatly appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Cory Carter

January 27, 2015

Dan Basta,
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am the state coordinator of Pax Christi Florida and I live in St. Augustine, Florida. I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because our organization respects the protection of our beautiful Florida waters, and especially the protection of endangered right whales, who need a protected habitat for their calving grounds.

We are outraged that 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act.

The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

Most importantly, we would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration. As a bonus, a National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Please strongly consider establishing a National Marine Sanctuary on the east coast of Florida

Sincerely

Nancy O'Byrne

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Date 2/1/15

Dan Basta,
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a Thomas Deasy and I live in Flagler Beach, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds.

I am outraged that 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act..

The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries *enhance* recreational and commercial fishing.

We need to stop destroying the environment in our quest to support our lifestyles. Our children and grandchildren deserve to have uncompromised and beautiful surroundings.

Sincerely,

Thomas Deasy

■■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National
Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta;

I am a resident of northern Florida and here at home along the First Coast or in sites across the world I take an interest in the survival and welfare of whales. I've traveled to South Africa and more recently to Bar Harbor, ME to view whales. It's not just one thing- the belief that they are magnificent creatures, or that they represent a form of mammal life so social, intelligent and related to our own – that make me concerned. It's perhaps the inspiration and joy just watching or hearing their cries gives to me. I'm writing because people in leadership positions are wasting them, treating them like they would treat a bug on their doorstep.

In particular, I'm requesting your action to protect endangered right whales. I understand there is a possibility of creating a marine habitat for calving and for their shelter.

I'm outraged, saddened and distraught over the US Navy actions that will sacrifice an estimated 138,200 mega fauna for the future glory of oil/gas drilling.

I would be particularly relieved and pleased if the right and pilot whale area of eastern Florida could be protected for whales through exemptions from oil and gas exploration. I'm also aware that if we don't act soon, it may be devastating for the few hundreds of whales visiting our eastern shores.

On a positive note, I believe that a National Marine Sanctuary would be a boom for tourism, fisheries, science and a great gift to our children's children.

Yours truly,

Chris McDermott, MA, MPH

February 1, 2015

Dan Basta,
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

As a concerned resident of St. Augustine, Florida, I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a protected habitat for their calving grounds. In addition to calving grounds, the area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology and history, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from seismic testing and oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries enhance recreational and commercial fishing.

Sincerely

Mary Ann Rosenthal

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]


Feb. 4, 2015

Mr. Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Springs, MD 20910

RE: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am concerned citizen, and I live in Jacksonville Beach, Duval County, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because I want to protect the wonderful and irreplaceable marine wildlife off the coast of Florida. From the coral along the Oculina coral reef, all the attendant reef fish and other marine animals, through the various species of sea turtles who call this area home, to the dolphins and the endangered right whales, all of these species need to be protected. I am outraged that 138,000 large marine mammals could be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration.

I would like the entire area off the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration. A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education, and Florida's economy. Sanctuaries enhance recreational and commercial fishing, as well as preserving our natural marine wildlife heritage for generations to come, and I strongly support the creation of the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

Sincerely,

Dennis Eller

PETITION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED EUBAELENA OCULINA NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

November 2014

To:

Mr. Daniel Basta

Director, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

1305 East West Highway, N/NMS

Silver Spring, Md 20910

Dear Mr. Basta:

We, the undersigned, support the establishment of the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary:

Name

City, State

JANINE CIANCIOLO	SAINT PETERSBURG, FL 33713
Kristen Potter	Ft. Myers, FL 33957
Caitlin Smith	Sanibel, FL 33957
Nicole Finnigan	Sanibel, FL 33907
FRANCENE PENHALLOW	CLEARWATER, FL 33760
Karen Barnes	Burlington, ON, CAN L7M3X8
Emilie Johnsen	Daytona Beach, FL
Danielle Nichols	St. Petersburg, FL
Sarah Shedder	Largo, FL 33773
SEAN NORDQVIST	St. Petersburg, FL 33704
Stefanie Wolf	Sanibel, FL 33957
SHARON KWOK	HONG KONG
Alexa Hasselman	St. Petersburg, FL
Kathie Flood	Kirkland WA 98033
Jamunha Mates	St. Petersburg FL 33710
Robert Smith	St. Petersburg, FL 33705

PETITION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED EUBAELENA OCULINA NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

November 2014

To:

Mr. Daniel Basta

Director, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

1305 East West Highway, N/NMS

Silver Spring, Md 20910

Dear Mr. Basta:

We, the undersigned, support the establishment of the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary:

Name

City, State

Pamela Caillouet	Prairieville, LA 70769
Miles Archabal	Oriedo, FL 32765
Pamela Feudt	Sarasota, FL 34234
Mary Etheridge	Clearwater, FL 33756
Dene Roth	Anthem, AZ 85086
Mersades Nunez	Saint Petersburg, FL 33705
BILLY SNOOK	Vancouver WA 98685
Michelle Andersen	Tampa, FL 33611
Chekeia Wolf	Brandon, FL 33510
Marie Cook	St. Petersburg, FL 33701
Mike Potter	Mount Pleasant SC 29466
Manuel Lavalle	Fairfax, Virginia 22003
Laura Sams	Portland, OR
Alexandra Freeman	Clermont, FL
Katelyn Cucinotta	Lake Worth, FL
Tamika Fields	Crestview, FL 32539

PETITION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED EUBAELENA OCULINA NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

November 2014

To:

Mr. Daniel Basta

Director, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

1305 East West Highway, N/NMS

Silver Spring, Md 20910

Dear Mr. Basta:

We, the undersigned, support the establishment of the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary:

<u>Name</u>	<u>City, State</u>
Zoe Jacobsen	Pinellas Park, Florida
Lauren Eliopoulos	Gulfport, FL
Pam Longobardi	Atlanta, GA
Samantha Wilber	St. Petersburg, FL
Ryan Uhrig	Seminole, FL
Brianna Michaud	St. Petersburg, FL
Michael Pappas	Richmond, KY
Madison Redington	St. Petersburg, FL
Vivica Roberson	St. Petersburg, FL
FRANK PAPA	ST. PETERSBURG, FL
Sandra Wyandt	St. Petersburg, FL
Cathleen Burns	St. Augustine, FL

Dear Director Basta,

I am a U.S. citizen and I live in St. Augustine, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds.

I am outraged that 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act..

The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries enhance recreational and commercial fishing. Let's save our wildlife while there is wildlife left to save!

Sincerely,

Virginia Leveto

[REDACTED]



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www.avast.com



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: NATIONAL MARITIME SANCTUARY

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Wed, Jan 7, 2015 at 6:10 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 07, 2015 6:00 AM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: NATIONAL MARITIME SANCTUARY

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **marcella matthaei** <eubalina@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Dec 10, 2014 at 12:47 PM

Subject: Fwd: NATIONAL MARITIME SANCTUARY

To: marcellamatthaei@att.net

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **JEWEL GRUTMAN** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Mon, Dec 8, 2014 at 5:02 PM

Subject: NATIONAL MARITIME SANCTUARY

To: EUBALINA@gmail.com

December 8, 2014

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National
Marine Sanctuaries
NOOA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, Md. 20910

Re: The Eubalena Oculina National Maritime Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I have just learned about the proposed sanctuary and thank heavens for it. I am an attorney and a writer who lives in St. Augustine, Florida, right on the shore. I am horrified to think that seismic blasting will be permitted here just outside the three mile limit endangering all of the marine life, and especially the right whales and turtles that we locals have been working to protect for years.

I am writing in support of this newproposed sanctuary because without it we might just as well give up on Florida

as a place to live. Can you imagine what it would be like with distressed whales - mothers and calves and ancient turtles-- littering our beaches not to mention fish and dolphins and manatees that swim in our waters.

I came here to live because of the beauty and tranquility the area enjoyed. How can anyone sacrifice the creatures and corals etc. to oil and gas exploration which is not needed. Many of these species are endangered and protected and have been for many years. Without sanctuary protection they could be wiped out in short order. The entire First Coast area should be exempt from interference for commercial purposes for extractive energy sources.

The sanctuary is imperative to keep Florida a tourist destination and its tourism economy flourishing. The sanctuary would boost fishing resources and attract people to visit our state. The exploration will kill the state economically as well as the animals and fish and underwater flora and I, like many others, will flee the nasty mess such exploration will result in. The oil companies never really clean any thing up nor do they take the precautions that are necessary to protect animal life.

Sincerely yours,

Jewel Grutman



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www.avast.com



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Wildlife Sanctauary off Florida Coast

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Wed, Jan 7, 2015 at 6:10 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 07, 2015 6:01 AM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Wildlife Sanctauary off Florida Coast

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Spencer Friedberg** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Sun, Dec 14, 2014 at 8:55 AM

Subject: Wildlife Sanctauary off Florida Coast

To: EUBALINA@gmail.com

December 14, 2014

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National
Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a student and I live in Vero Beach, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

I think it is terrible that the Navy wants to come and harm the endangered right whales. There is so much oil and gas in this country, that there is no need for them to explore on our coastline.

I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds.

I am outraged that 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act..

The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries **enhance** recreational and commercial fishing.

Sincerely,

Spencer Friedberg

Vero Beach, FL



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www.avast.com



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Wildlife Marine Sanctuary off Florida Coast

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Wed, Jan 7, 2015 at 6:10 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 07, 2015 6:02 AM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Wildlife Marine Sanctuary off Florida Coast

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Spencer Friedberg** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Sun, Dec 14, 2014 at 8:59 AM

Subject: Wildlife Marine Sanctuary off Florida Coast

To: EUBALINA@gmail.com

December 14, 2014

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National
Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a lover of all animals and I live in Vero Beach, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

I think it is terrible that the Navy wants to come and harm the endangered right whales. There is so much oil and gas in this country, that there is no need for them to explore on our coastline.

I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds.

I am outraged that 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act..

The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries **enhance** recreational and commercial fishing.

Sincerely,

Richard Friedberg

Vero Beach, FL



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Wildlife Marine Sanctuary off Florida coast

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Wed, Jan 7, 2015 at 6:10 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, January 07, 2015 6:03 AM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Wildlife Marine Sanctuary off Florida coast

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Spencer Friedberg** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Tue, Dec 16, 2014 at 7:12 PM

Subject: Wildlife Marine Sanctuary off Florida coast

To: EUBALINA@gmail.com

December 16, 2014

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National
Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a student and I live in Vero Beach, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

I think they should focus on a different part of the country. There is other places around the country to drill.

I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds.

I am outraged that 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act..

The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries **enhance** recreational and commercial fishing.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Buckley

Vero Beach, FL



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: stabilizing the quality of life in NE Florida!

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Tue, Dec 16, 2014 at 5:26 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FYI from Marcella

----- Begin forwarded message -----

Subject: stabilizing the quality of life in NE Florida!

Date: 12/16/14 03:14:31 PM

From: "mark q martindale" <[REDACTED]>

To: "whitney trustees current current" <[REDACTED]> "whitney faculty faculty" <[REDACTED]> "whitney docents" <[REDACTED]>

greetings everyone, as i think you will all agree, the St. Augustine area is a special place to live, due in large part to the relatively pristine nature of the estuarine system in our back yard, that not only houses a large part of our state's biodiversity, but also maintains the natural buffering system between land and sea.

now it is time to worry about our FRONT yard. there is a group of concerned citizens from OUR area that are thinking well into the future, focussing on protecting our beaches, marine life, and water quality on the Atlantic side. i have attached a revised proposal from a group called the Friends of the Matanzas written by a former Whitney BOT member, Marcella Matthaei to set aside some of our coastal waters as a National Marine Sanctuary. many people (including me) do not know so much about the Marine Sanctuary system so i have attached a short version of a part of their application materials. i think that all of us, and our families, have benefitted from the terrestrial National Park system and so it makes sense to treat our marine environment with

the same respect. this document will hopefully provide some factual information to give you and idea of what we can do.

the most immediate threat to our near and long term stability is off shore oil drilling (think "Deepwater Horizon oil spill" on the Gulf side on St. A beaches and seeping in to the river...). one of the benefits of making a Marine Sanctuary is that it specifically outlaws oil drilling because everyone up to our nations lawmakers knows that it is just not possible to guarantee safe oil drilling practices (the Deepwater Horizon oil spill comes to mind..). in addition, the technology to find profitable under sea oil reserves involves high energy "seismic testing" which has been shown to be detrimental to living marine organisms.

i encourage you to read the attached document and if you would like to help protect our shores in NE Florida, please contact Marcella or any of the other Friends of the Matanzas.


<http://www.whitney.ufl.edu/>

a new open access journal EvoDevo:

<http://www.evodevojournal.com/>



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2 attachments



Mark Q. Martindale, PhD
Professor and Director, Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience
Interim Director, Seahorse Key Marine Laboratory
University of Florida
9606 Ocean Shore Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL 32080-8810
Phone: (904) 485-4091

signaturemark3.jpg
38K



Revised Nomination General Short Version.pdf
294K



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Matanzas seashore

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Mon, Jan 12, 2015 at 6:41 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, January 12, 2015 6:40 PM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Matanzas seashore

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **William Dobes** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Mon, Jan 12, 2015 at 12:52 PM

Subject: Matanzas seashore

To: "eubalina@gmail.com" <eubalina@gmail.com>

We are long time residents of Crescent Beach and want to strongly urge you and the powers that be to set up a national seashore sanctuary as soon as possible. Martha and Bill Dobes. [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Fwd: Letter of support for marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Sat, Jan 17, 2015 at 9:08 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: marcella matthaei <eubalina@gmail.com>
Date: January 16, 2015 at 6:58:38 PM PST
To: marcella matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>
Subject: Fwd: Letter of support for marine Sanctuary

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Sandy Bond** <[REDACTED]>
Date: Mon, Jan 12, 2015 at 9:09 PM
Subject: Letter of support for marine Sanctuary
To: "eubalina@gmail.com" <eubalina@gmail.com>

Dan Basta,
Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a concerned resident and retired University Professor and I live in St Augustine, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because:

- I respect protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a protected habitat for their calving grounds.
- I do not want put at risk numerous other marine wildlife: mammals, dolphins and fish through air blast testing or other activities that may endanger them.

- I do not want to negatively impact the costal economies through oil and gas exploration and related activities.
- I am outraged that a reported 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration many of which are endangered species and all protected under the Marine Mammal Act.
- The area covered by the proposed sanctuary contains numerous items of invaluable maritime archeology, many of which have yet to be carefully examined. These artifacts tell the story of our history here, and should be protected so that they can be preserved and studied.

I would like an area of the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sanctuaries enhance recreational and commercial fishing.

Sincerely,

Dr Sandy Bond



www.americanvaluationpartners.com/bond.html



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Letter of Support

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Tue, Jan 27, 2015 at 4:33 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: Nana [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2015 2:25 PM
To: 'eubalina@gmail.com'
Subject: Natonal Marine Sanctuary -- YES!!

January 27, 2015

Dan Basta, Director
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Projgram
1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a retired registered nurse, Unitarian Universalist Green Team co-chair, President of St Augustine Beach Community Garden, Right Whale Survey Team Member, a lover of nature, and I live in St Augustine Beach, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because I value protection of endangered right whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds.

I value the right of other marine species to exist in their habitats free of harm.

I want the ocean off the east coast of Florida to be exempt from oil and gas exploration. In

fact, I know that in order for us to survive in a livable world we much leave most of the remaining fossil fuel in the ground--we should not be exploring for more!

Selfishly speaking, a National Marine Sanctuary would be a godsend for tourism, education and the economy of Florida.

This is a no-brainer. We need this sanctuary.

Sincerely,

Nana Royer

David Perkins

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Support for marine sanctuary proposal

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Thu, Jan 29, 2015 at 5:37 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2015 5:36 PM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Support for marine sanctuary proposal

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Vance / Collette** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Thu, Jan 29, 2015 at 8:48 AM

Subject: Support for marine sanctuary proposal

To: eubalina@gmail.com

We support the Friends of Matanzas Inc. proposal that a National Marine Sanctuary be established off the East coast of Florida from the south side of the St. Johns River southward to Malabar in Brevard County. The purpose to protect calving grounds of the endangered Northern Right Whale and other marine mammals and fish species.

Collette Wright and Vance LeClair

—

Vance & Collette LeClair

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: national marine sanctuary

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Tue, Feb 3, 2015 at 4:43 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 03, 2015 4:42 PM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: national marine sanctuary

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Shirley DeWitt** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Mon, Feb 2, 2015 at 6:21 PM

Subject: national marine sanctuary

To: eubalina@gmail.com

please save our oceans and create a national marine sanctuary and preven seismic testing and drilling on the atlantic seaboard... thank u



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Wed, Feb 4, 2015 at 5:09 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, February 04, 2015 5:08 PM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Solaun, Joan D** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Wed, Feb 4, 2015 at 10:40 AM

Subject: Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

To: "eubalina@gmail.com" <eubalina@gmail.com>

Dan Basta, Director of the Office of National

Marine Sanctuaries

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program

1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta,

I am a university administrator and I live in St. Augustine, Florida.

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because the ocean is an important part of our world and the reason many of us live on the coast of Florida. I do not wish to see it subjected to the threats of oil and gas exploration.

A National Marine Sanctuary would be a boon for tourism, education and Florida's economy.

Sincerely,

Joan D. Solaun, Ph.D



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Sat, Feb 7, 2015 at 6:45 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Saturday, February 07, 2015 6:45 AM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Mike Dianne Walsh** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Fri, Feb 6, 2015 at 10:23 PM

Subject: Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

To: eubalina@gmail.com

Dan Basta, Director

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program

1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Director Basta,

We are writing to strongly support the proposed Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary.

While living in St Johns, FL we have become aware of the oil and gas exploration likely coming for east coast of Florida.

The Marine Mammal Act protects whales and many other species, some endangered, of sharks, rays, marine mammals and turtles- all of which could be sacrificed in the interest of oil and gas exploration. The extremely endangered right whales, whose calving grounds occur in that same area would be in peril without the added protection of a sanctuary. Recreational and commercial fishing would be enhanced with this marine protection.

If the proposed sanctuary is approved, Florida will benefit greatly in its natural resource and archaeological related tourism, education and economy.

Please add your support to this worthy idea.

Sincerely,

Dianne and Michael Walsh

St Johns, FL 32259



This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.

www.avast.com



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: Eubalina Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Sat, Feb 21, 2015 at 7:34 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Mr. Dan Basta,

Director

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program

1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor

Silver Spring, MD 20910

I have been a "northerner" for most of my 85 years, residing in Michigan, New York and Connecticut. Enduring, in all those years, frigid, snow-filled and icy winters, I had dreamed of spending my later years in a southern coastal city. Finally, in a financial position to do so, I moved to St. Augustine one and a half years ago.

I have been stunned, in the last several months, to hear of probable seismic testing for oil and gas deposits off the East coast of my new state, destroying much of the marine wildlife, including the calving area of the endangered right whales, and several species of turtle, to say nothing of destroying most of the beautiful beaches for which Florida has been famous for centuries! And to learn that President Obama is considering granting licenses to several oil and gas companies to carry out this destructive testing.

Florida's west coast having already been damaged by the Gulf of Mexico oil spill should be enough of a scare!

I strongly believe that a National Marine Sanctuary, established off Florida's east coast, would protect our most valuable resource would, be a boon for Florida's tourism economy, enhancing recreational and commercial fishing and provide a buffer of protection for the area from destructive oil and gas exploration!

Durector Basta - PLEASE let Floridians know that a National Marine Sanctuary will be established off our east coast soon!!!

Sincerely,

Conrad Matthew



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No virus found in this message.

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Version: 2015.0.5645 / Virus Database: 4284/9108 - Release Date: 02/13/15



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George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Fwd: Save The Indian River/Mosquito Lagoon

1 message

Annie Sawabini <annie.sawabini@noaa.gov>

Mon, Feb 23, 2015 at 11:23 AM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>, Billy Causey - NOAA Federal <billy.causey@noaa.gov>

Cc: Matt Brookhart <Matt.Brookhart@noaa.gov>

FYI

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Save The Indian River/Mosquito Lagoon

Date: Sat, 5 Jul 2014 23:11:03 -0400

From: Sam Whisnant <[REDACTED]>

To: sanctuary.nominations@noaa.gov

Hello I'm 16. Located on the East coast of Florida in the central region. Near the cities of New Smyrna Beach, Oak Hill, Edgewater, Merit Island and Canaveral National Seashore. There is Mosquito Lagoon. Mosquito Lagoon is the 2nd MOST BIO-DIVERSE REGION IN THE WORLD! AND ITS DYING!:(It is being poisoned all along the coast of florida and desperately needs our help. There has been dozens of protest to clean the Indian River, and us citizens would like to swim in our river again as it is illegal to swim in it now due to it not being protected and being poisoned. I and Us desperately need your help. Please make Mosquito Lagoon, the 2nd MOST BIO-DIVERSE REGION IN THE WORLD a protected area. It deserves it:) we deserve it:) Nobody should be allowed to destroy our beautiful river that flows with our atlantic ocean.



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

FW: National Marine Sanctuary Program

1 message

Marcella Matthaei <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Sun, Mar 8, 2015 at 12:02 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

From: marcella matthaei [mailto:eubalina@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, March 08, 2015 12:01 PM

To: marcella matthaei

Subject: Fwd: National Marine Sanctuary Program

On Sat, Mar 7, 2015 at 6:05 AM, Cathy Guevarra <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Cathy Guevarra

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

March 7, 2015

Dan Basta
Director

Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
1305 East - West Highway, 11th Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: The Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Director Basta:

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary because I have lived my whole life in Florida and am outraged to think that the marine animals living off our coast will be harmed and or killed needlessly in the search for dirty fossil fuels. I respect the protection of endangered right

whales and strongly desire a particularly protected habitat for their calving grounds. I am also saddened that 138,200 mega fauna will be sacrificed to oil company interests.

I want an end to this type of pursuit and a strong witness to the pursuit of protection for endangered species and the health of our oceans. Please advocate for our future generations.

Sincerely,

Cathy Guevarra
Florida Resident of 56 years



This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.
www.avast.com



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Fwd: Marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Mon, Mar 9, 2015 at 8:22 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Penelope McCormick <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 9, 2015 at 6:27:26 PM EDT
To: eubalina@gmail.com
Subject: Marine Sanctuary

To Mr. Dan Basta, NOAA

We support the establishment of the Eubalaena Oculina Marine Sanctuary off Florida's east coast. People and wildlife depend on a healthy environment along our coast. Practices such as seismic blasting and oil drilling threaten that environment. We believe that the establishment of a marine sanctuary will halt seismic blasting and oil drilling off the coast. The protected area will not in any way alter the life style or habits of those people who use the coast in a responsible manner. The Marine Sanctuary will protect the waters for future generations.

Bill and Penny McCormick

Penelope McCormick

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Fwd: Nomination of the Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Wed, Mar 18, 2015 at 6:36 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: David Sokolsky <[REDACTED]>
Date: March 18, 2015 at 4:01:00 PM EDT
To: "eubalina@gmail.com" <eubalina@gmail.com>
Subject: Nomination of the Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary

David Sokolsky

[REDACTED]
Brooklyn, New York

11230

To Whom it may concern,

The purpose of this letter is to support the nomination of the Eubaelena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary. It was Marcella Matthaei who convinced me that the North Eastern coast of Florida does need to be protected from the prospect of oil and gas exploration.

Although I am not a full-time resident of Florida I am a property owner and tax payer in the state of Florida. Please consider the nomination seriously so that the proper resources may go into protecting this wonderful area.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Sokolsky



George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Fwd: Marine Sanctuary

1 message

Marcella <marcellamatthaei@att.net>

Thu, Mar 19, 2015 at 5:38 PM

To: George Sedberry - NOAA Federal <george.sedberry@noaa.gov>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Date: March 19, 2015 at 5:29:22 PM EDT
To: Eubalina@gmail.com
Cc: marcellamatthaei@att.net, [REDACTED]
Subject: Marine Sanctuary

Norma Asnes

[REDACTED]
New York, NY
10028

Dear Sir or Madam,

The creation of the Eubalina Oculina Marine Sanctuary is a very important and worthy cause to me. I often spend vacation time in St. Augustine, Florida and I want to be assured that it will remain a clean environment so that my grandchildren may also enjoy it in the future. There are other ways to stimulate economic development that must be explored before allowing industrial interests to overrun the natural environment.

Please nominate the Eubalina Oculina National Marine Sanctuary to establish a nationally recognized sanctuary and allow the fish and wildlife to be properly cared for in their natural habitats.

Sincerely, Norma K. Asnes

FRIENDS OF THE MATANZAS



TELEPHONE
(904) 794-1281

September 8, 2009

Dr. Jane Lubchenco

NOAA Administrator

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Potential Northeast Florida National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

Congratulations on your appointment as NOAA Administrator. The Friends of Matanzas, Inc., a Florida non-profit corporation dedicated to the protection of the quality of life in St. Johns and Flagler Counties, is especially encouraged by your initiative for a comprehensive national system of marine protected areas. We would appreciate your consideration of our proposal to establish a National Marine Sanctuary in northeast Florida. A number of organizations support this effort, and have co-signed this request.

The Friends have growing concerns about the environmental quality of our estuarine and marine areas: our waters, marshlands, and surrounding uplands nurture remarkable biological resources, but they are still under the constant pressure of development. A National Marine Sanctuary designation would give our citizens and groups an opportunity to present and discuss these resources and threats, and would provide a process through which a management plan could be created. We feel that meaningful, sustainable protection can be achieved in a way that still allows people to enjoy these natural resources.

We have recently reviewed information about the coastal features of our region and have compared them to the purposes of national marine sanctuaries. We believe that our area's features match those highlighted in the legislation that established the sanctuary system. Our nearshore area has significant biological, historical and geological resources. These include the calving grounds of the North Atlantic right whale, numerous submerged historic shipwrecks, a first-magnitude submarine spring, and the Matanzas Inlet, the last undredged, unjettied inlet on Florida's Atlantic coast.

1093 A1A Beach Boulevard, PMB 205 * St. Augustine, FL 32080-6733

- 1 The shallow ocean waters off south Georgia and northeast Florida, including St. Johns County, are the calving area for the North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). These whales are the rarest of all large whale species and among the rarest of all marine mammals. The nearshore coastal waters are designated a critical habitat for this endangered species.
- 2 St. Augustine has been continuously settled by Europeans since 1565. Historically, the St. Augustine inlet – within an area of shifting sands and shallow bars – has provided a treacherous approach to the settlement. From 1570 to 1960, more than 100 vessels were lost in the inlets and off the coast of St. Johns County. The shipwrecks are important cultural resources that are helping to tell the tale of almost 450 years of European settlement in the area.
- 3 Located about 2.5 miles offshore of Crescent Beach is a first magnitude submarine spring that, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, has an outflow greatly exceeding 100 cubic feet per second. The Crescent Beach spring has been studied for more than 125 years and has reportedly been used by mariners as a source of fresh water for hundreds of years. But Florida's shallow coastal shelf, including the Crescent Beach spring area, was above sea level when people first arrived in Florida approximately 12,000 years ago. Indeed, this spring has been identified as one of six northeast Florida areas with a high-probability for Paleo Indian sites.
- 4 The Matanzas Inlet, south of St. Augustine, is unusual in that it is the last undredged, unjettied inlet on Florida's Atlantic Coast. The inlet is the connection between the Atlantic Ocean and the Matanzas River, and coastal processes are active and relatively unrestricted in the area. The ocean recently breached the dunes about one-half mile south of the inlet, providing further opportunity to study coastal dynamics, including dramatic changes in species distribution.

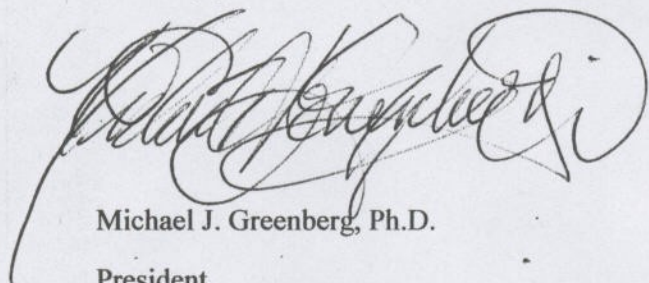
Local, state and federal governments are active in protecting the estuarine and on-shore resources of the area. The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve is located in the estuary that extends southward, from about the Duval-St. Johns County line, to slightly south of the St. Johns-Flagler County line. This NERR is now also designated as a Marine Protected Area. The University of Florida's Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience is located in the southern portion of the Reserve. Maintaining the outstanding quality of the estuarine and ocean waters of this region is essential to both the ecosystems managed by the NERR, and the investigations carried out at the Whitney Lab.

Two national monuments and numerous state parks, forests and conservation areas protect the uplands of this area. Some nearshore waters were designated as a State Archaeological Reserve Area in 1968. A movement is underway to have the region designated by Congress as a National Historic Area – the Nation's Oldest Port. This locally managed effort would focus on community-centered initiatives to preserve our heritage.

A National Marine Sanctuary along the northeast coast of Florida would provide a unified management structure for the resources described above and would complement existing management efforts. It would afford the public an open process to discuss the area's ocean resources and to form a consensus on how to manage them, both for their protection, and for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. It is poignantly fitting that the Sanctuary would protect some of the calving grounds of the North Atlantic right whale; the last right whale hunted in U.S. waters was slain off of St. Augustine in 1935.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to hearing from you.

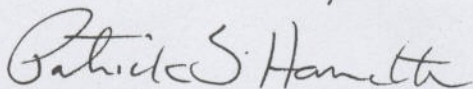
Sincerely yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Greenberg".

Michael J. Greenberg, Ph.D.

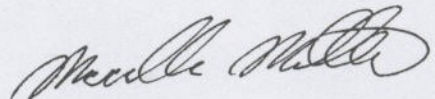
President

Friends of Matanzas, Inc.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Patrick S. Hamilton".

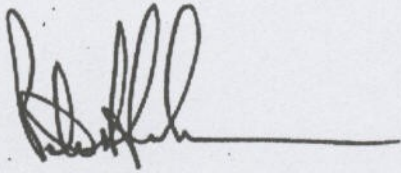
Patrick S. Hamilton

Friends of Matanzas, Inc.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Marcella H. Matthaei".

Marcella H. Matthaei

Friends of Matanzas, Inc.

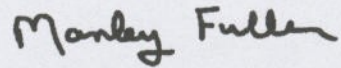


Peter A. V. Anderson, Ph.D.

Director



THE WHITNEY LABORATORY
FOR MARINE BIOSCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

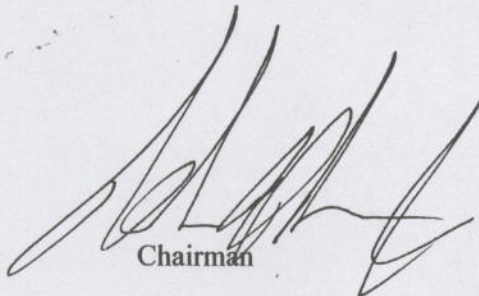


Manley K Fuller, III

President



Florida Wildlife Federation

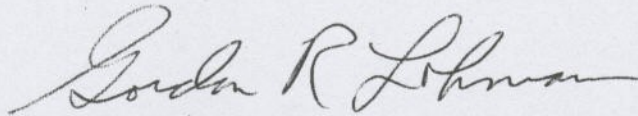


Chairman

Board of Directors



Audubon OF FLORIDA



Gordon R. Lohman

President

SOUTH ANASTASIA COMMUNITIES ASSOCIATION

Encl: Selected nearshore resources of northeast Florida

cc:

John H. Dunnigan, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Oceans and Coasts

Daniel Basta, Director, Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Billy D. Causey, Regional Director, Southeast NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

George Sedberry, Superintendent, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary

Felicia Coleman, Director, Florida State University Coastal & Marine Laboratory

Selected Nearshore Resources of Northeast Florida

With Focus on the St. Johns County, Florida Area

Prepared by Jim Muller, Muller and Associates, Inc.

August 2, 2009

The Friends of Matanzas, Inc. is a Florida non-profit corporation dedicated to the protection of the quality of life in St. Johns and Flagler Counties. The Friends have growing concerns about the environmental quality of the estuarine and marine areas. The nearshore area has major resources, including the calving grounds of the North Atlantic right whale, numerous submerged historic shipwrecks, the Crescent Beach submarine spring, and the Matanzas Inlet, the last undredged, unjettied inlet on Florida's Atlantic coast. Other important resources are present, such as breeding and nesting sea turtles and shorebirds, the marine/estuarine water quality, and the coquina geological formations.

North Atlantic right whale

The shallow ocean waters off south Georgia and northeast Florida, including St. Johns County, are the calving area for the North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). These whales are the rarest of all large whale species and among the rarest of all marine mammal species. Listed on the U.S. endangered species list since 1973, the western North Atlantic population is believed to be only about 350. The endangered species recovery plan was approved in 1991 and revised in 2005. Three areas were designated as critical habitat in 1994, including coastal Georgia and Florida from the Altamaha River, Georgia to Sebastian Inlet, Florida. The whales give birth in this area from December through March and migrate to higher latitudes during spring and summer. The ocean waters off of St. Johns County from shore to a distance of five miles out are included in the critical habitat designation.

Imperiled shore birds

The shifting sands and intertidal zone of St. John County's oceanfront are critical to the feeding and reproduction of numerous shorebirds, including listed species such as the least tern, *Sternula antillarum*, listed as threatened on the state list, and the piping plover, *Charadrius melodus*, listed as threatened on the federal lists. The nesting colony of least terns at the southern end of Anastasia Island is the largest on Florida's Atlantic coast. Dependent upon wide sand and shell beaches with sparse vegetation and high enough to avoid tidal overwash, the nesting sites are impacted by human activities, predation, and storms. The US Fish and Wildlife Service piping plover recovery plan identifies the Anastasia Island/Matanzas Inlet area as wintering sites essential to piping plover conservation.

Submerged Maritime Cultural Resources

St. Augustine has been continuously settled by Europeans since 1565. Historically, the St. Augustine inlet has been a treacherous approach to the settlement, with an area of shifting sands and shallow bars sometimes referred to as Crazy Shoals. More than 100 vessels were lost in the inlets and off the coast of St. Johns County from 1570 to 1960. In 1968 the State of Florida designated an area off the St. Johns County coast as one of four Archaeological Reserve Areas in the state, in recognition of important submerged cultural resources. Underwater archaeological research is underway and strong storms occasionally reveal shipwrecks on the beaches and in the dunes of the area. The shipwrecks are important historical artifacts that help tell the tale of almost 450 years of European settlement in the area.

Crescent Beach Submarine Spring

Located approximately 2.5 miles offshore of Crescent Beach, the Crescent Beach submarine spring has been studied for more than 125 years, and was reportedly used as a fresh water source by mariners for hundreds of years. Recent work by the U.S. Geological Survey shows that this is a first magnitude spring, with its outflow greatly exceeding 100 cubic feet per second. Florida has 33 documented first magnitude springs, more than any other state or country.

According to the St. Johns River Water Management District, water from this spring is approximately 10,000 years old, indicating the spring "has a deep flow system and a regional area of influence." The spring water originates in the recharge area around Keystone Heights, about 50 miles west of Crescent Beach. Florida's shallow coastal shelf, including the Crescent Beach spring area, was above sea level when people first arrived in Florida approximately 12,000 years ago. This spring may have been one of the few sources of fresh water. In *An Environmental History of Northeast Florida*, James Miller, former State Archaeologist of Florida, suggests the Crescent Beach submarine spring is one of six northeast Florida areas with a high-probability for Paleo Indian sites.

Coastal Processes

The Matanzas Inlet, south of St. Augustine, is unusual in that it is the last undredged,unjettied inlet on Florida's Atlantic Coast. The inlet connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Matanzas River. Although the southern landfall of the A1A Matanzas Inlet bridge is armored, coastal processes are active and relatively unrestricted in the area. The ocean recently breached the dunes about one-half mile south of the inlet, providing further opportunity to study coastal dynamics. The new inlet is approximately where the historical Piñon Inlet was located circa 1732.

The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve is located in the estuary that extends south from approximately the Duval-St. Johns County line to slightly south of the St. Johns-Flagler County line. The reserve is "dedicated to the conservation of natural biodiversity and cultural resources through research and monitoring to guide science-based stewardship and education strategies." The University of Florida Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience is located in the southern portion of the reserve. Continued outstanding estuarine and ocean water quality is essential to the reserve's ecosystems and the operations of the Whitney Lab.

A National Marine Sanctuary along the northeast coast of Florida would provide a unified management structure for the resources described above as well as others not listed. It would afford the public an open process in which to discuss the area's resources and to form a consensus on how to manage the resources for both their protection and the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. It is poignantly fitting that the Sanctuary would protect some of the calving grounds of the North Atlantic right whale; the last right whale hunted in U.S. waters was slain off of St. Augustine in 1935.