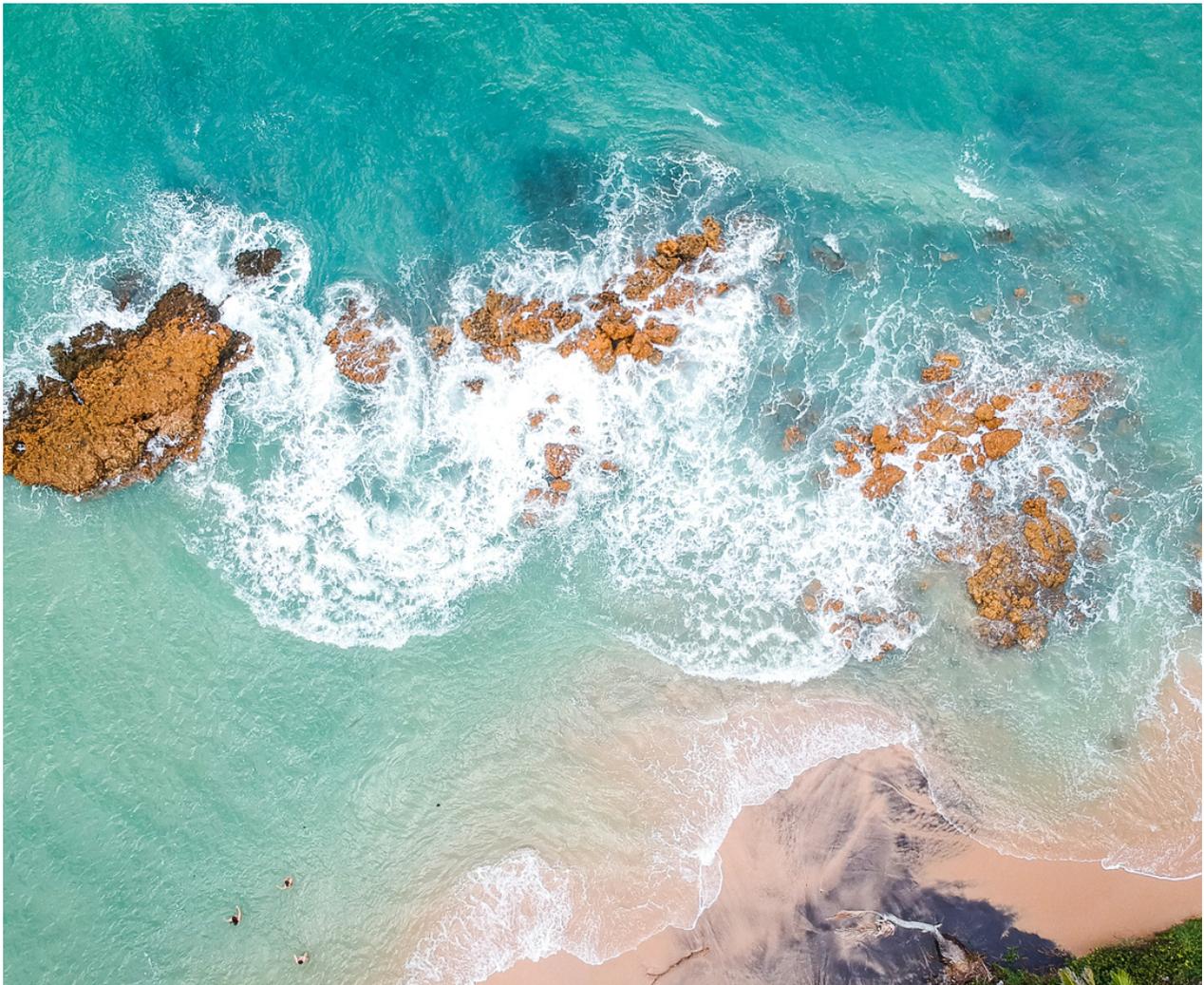


WHERE TWO TIDES MEET:

**How cultural heritage management principles can inform
natural heritage destination stewardship strategy**



OVERVIEW



The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) is embarking upon a five-year internal strategic planning process to explore the critical role of destination stewardship in the National Marine Sanctuary system's conservation mission.

The goal of this practical product is to share ideas rooted in values-based cultural heritage management to assist ONMS in further informing its internal destination stewardship strategy. The overall aim is to ask: how can ONMS further interact, connect, and engage with destination communities to understand their relationships to, and the impacts of, national marine sanctuaries?

By better understanding national marine sanctuary destination communities ONMS can more effectively engage in stewardship planning that defines benefits not just for national marine sanctuaries but for the communities that are impacted by them. A broadening of this understanding can be useful in identifying further opportunities including:

- Fostering foundational engagement with Native American stakeholders
- Expanded engagement with host and impact communities
- Development of strategic partnership possibilities
- Identification of new equitable and accessible experience potentials
- Development of inclusive communication, education and outreach strategies
- Increased understanding and quantification of how national marine sanctuaries benefit local economies
- Ensuring management and community goals are aligned as mutual value adds

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	Introduction
5-7	Expanding Ideas of Values
8-10	Understanding Community Use
11	Community Impacts of National Marine Sanctuaries
12	How Communities Relate to National Marine Sanctuaries
13	Expanding Community Engagement
14-15	Increasing Native American Community Engagement
16-17	Practical Applications
18	Conclusion
19-20	References
21	About This Report

INTRODUCTION

Historically, an important aspect of shared culture in the United States rests in natural resource conservation. The long history of setting aside natural places, both on land and in water, for protection and public enjoyment is a national ethos unrivaled elsewhere in the world.

With this in mind it is important to recognize that the designation of a place as a national marine sanctuary changes its meaning to people. When an area is recognized with a designation its value is elevated and this, in turn, affects how people feel about it. Exploring these social, cultural, and even emotional connections through a cultural heritage lens can create a host of stewardship opportunities.

This mingling of natural and cultural heritage benefits from an approach combining marine and conservation science with social science; one that views “the heritages of culture and nature...as interconnected, indeed, indivisible. If they are twins, they are Siamese twins, separated only at high risk of the demise of both” (Lowenthal, 2005, p. 85). As such, the management of federally designated national marine sanctuaries benefits from an expanded consideration of values beyond being natural assets. This approach also considers how communities value the assets and creates opportunities by examining how they also use the assets, are impacted by them, and how they relate to them.

“The acknowledgment and conservation of the diversity of the cultural and natural heritage, fair access to it and the equitable sharing of the benefits deriving from its use, enhance the feeling of place and belonging, mutual respect for others and a sense of purpose and ability to maintain a common good, which contribute to the social cohesion of a community as well as to individual and collective freedom of choice and action. The ability to access, enjoy and care for one’s heritage is essential for what the Nobel prize winner Amartya Sen calls the “capability of individuals to live and to be what they choose”, that is a fundamental component of human development” (UNESCO, 2015, section 2, para. 7).

With this in mind, values-based cultural heritage management approaches can help to expand awareness of, and involvement with, national marine sanctuaries as a form of destination stewardship. **By exploring how destination communities value, use, are impacted by, and relate to national marine sanctuaries, ONMS has the opportunity to expand its position as both a conscientious resource manager and community stewardship leader—not just in destination communities but to the broader public.**

EXPLORING VALUES

When a place is designated as a national marine sanctuary its value changes. While most relate to values as economic, the designation of conservation and heritage spaces can create social and personal values beyond the purely economic. As Hosagrahar et al. (2016) note, “the inherent or intrinsic value of cultural heritage is not linked to use or function that it serves but as identity, embodiment of accumulated knowledge, that bonds community to space, determining the spirit of place and source of pride that is of interest for future generations as a non-renewable cultural resource we have been handed down by previous generations” (p.9).

This type of personal or social value is extremely powerful. Understanding how communities value heritage assets can open up inroads to harness that power into stewardship action, both locally and beyond. With these feelings of connection and responsibility also comes an opportunity to collect economic data based on such alternative valuations.

Linda Bilmes, Harvard professor of public finance and U.S. member of the UN committee of experts on public administration, and a team of resource economists set out to quantify the value of heritage designation in relation to the National Park system. What they found was that support for National Parks was extremely strong with very little statistical difference by region, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status (Bilmes, 2019). So strong, in fact, that 80 percent of households would be willing to pay higher taxes—to the tune of \$92 billion in additional taxes per year—to support National Parks and programs regardless of whether they visit them or not (Bilmes, 2019, 1:00:00). An interesting note is that programs are valued nearly twice as much as the places themselves—\$62 billion vs. \$30 billion—a clear indicator that education, interpretation, and other programs related to heritage assets are highly valued by the public (Bilmes, 2019, 58:35).

94.9%

of people believe it is important to protect historic sites whether they visit them or not.

Bilmes, 2019

Table 2.2 Attitudes toward the NPS units and NPS programs

<i>Statement</i>	<i>% of respondents who agree^a</i>
1. It is important to me that historic sites are protected for current and future generations whether I visit them or not.	94.9%
2. National Park areas are good places to bring children to learn about nature.	96.2%
3. Local governments do not need any help from the National Park Service to protect local historic sites and buildings.	14.6%
4. I enjoy visiting historic sites and buildings.	89.8%
5. The U.S. should sell off some National Parks.	6.2%
6. Local governments should be able to provide trails, parks and open spaces in communities without the help of the National Park Service.	39.9%
7. I enjoy using local trails, parks and open spaces in my community and in other places.	86.6%
8. I do not benefit directly from National Parks.	14.7%
9. Private businesses could probably do a better job than the federal government at protecting local historic sites and buildings.	22.2%
10. It is important to me that trails, parks, and open spaces in communities are protected for current and future generations, whether I use them or not.	93.5%
11. National Parks are important to me because I enjoy visiting them.	80.8%
12. It is important to me that National Parks are preserved for current and future generations whether I visit them or not.	94.8%

a Percentage of respondents indicating they either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement.

Fig. 1. Still from Bilmes, 2019, (1:00:00).

Bilmes (2019) also points out these types of social or alternative values, and their associated economic values, relevant to natural and cultural heritage sites include:

- **Existence value:** The asset has value simply because it exists, not solely because it can be visited
- **Ecosystem value:** Carbon sequestration, providing wildlife habitat, popular viewsheds
- **Intellectual property value:** Iconic value for terrain and scenery; inspiring arts, films, movies, music
- **Connected/cooperative value:** Value for other federal/state/local agencies, organizations, foundations
- **Bequest value:** Protected in perpetuity for all to enjoy
- **Human capital value:** Educational value, historical value (56:25)

Though Bilmes' research is specific to National Parks, national marine sanctuaries are little different. "Designation matters," states Bilmes (2019, 1:05:10) and any place branded with a National Park or national marine sanctuary designation takes on new meaning to local communities and the general public. Designating something as worthy of attention and protection creates meaning in general and, specifically, reinforces social identities for those directly related to the site. Creating programs that expand the information about, and understanding of, such sites further extends that special feeling.

As internal guidance, exploring and understanding these kinds of values can foster connections between asset managers and community members, establishing a well-informed basis from which to begin examining how ONMS might better steward communities in order to increase stewardship of specific sites as well as the system overall. As noted by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA, 2021), "lack of engagement is not due to a lack of interest from the outside organizations but can be partially attributed to the fact that the System has not established or communicated a clear value proposition as to why organizations should partner with the System. A clear value proposition that defines the mutually beneficial relationship of partnering with the System can entice new groups and help expand the System's outreach to external partners. This in turn benefits the System through the resource multipliers that the partners can provide..." (p. 67).

Lastly, an important question to ask when it comes to how communities value natural and cultural resources is, who determines it? Understanding and recognizing that past determinations may have excluded historically marginalized or underrepresented voices can be a starting point in establishing relationships with crucial stewards and stakeholders. Being open to the possibilities of alternative values can create expanded engagements of core audiences, leading to a ripple effect of stewardship possibilities through not just host communities, but visitor and potential audiences. A firm grasp on values, both systemwide and by site, forms a basis of broader engagement opportunities that can be furthered by research into how communities that value national marine sanctuaries also use, are impacted by, and relate to them.



COMMUNITY USE

Understanding how destination communities use the resource can lead to greater understanding and opportunities for both stewardship and partnerships. Maritime heritage resources have been identified as crucial within the national marine sanctuary system and a maritime cultural landscape framework is already being implemented within the system as part of the *ONMS Maritime Heritage Program Policy*. As this guidance notes, “For the NMS system, maritime heritage is the wide variety of tangible and intangible elements (historic, cultural and archaeological resources) which represent our human connections to our Great Lakes and ocean areas” (Van Tilburg, 2021, p.2).

These human, and many times intangible, connections are largely based in how communities use, and have traditionally used, the resource. A broader cultural landscape context can help identify these uses as well as open engagement possibilities with stakeholder audiences. An expanded definition of cultural landscapes that includes, but is not limited to, maritime landscapes is those that embrace “a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment” (UNESCO, n.d., History and Terminology section, para 3). This broader idea of cultural landscapes accepts that these are places that “are a legacy for everyone. These special sites reveal aspects of our country’s origins and development as well as our evolving relationships with the natural world. They provide scenic, economic, ecological, social, recreational, and educational opportunities helping communities to better understand themselves” (Cultural Landscape Foundation, n.d., para. 2).

There is an opportunity with this expanded recognition of cultural landscapes for ONMS to explore not only how human use affects national marine sanctuaries but how national marine sanctuary designation affects the community’s use of the resource itself.

Beyond the more tangible underwater assets such as shipwrecks, maritime cultural heritage reflects the ways humans have interacted with coastal areas—from the traditional and historical perspective of American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Hawaiians to the present day. This includes heritage that is expressed through the broader heritage landscape including oral histories, food traditions, cultural byways, iconic coastlines, living culture, wildlife culture, arts and crafts, and more.



Traditional uses as well as contemporary uses of national marine sanctuary-designated sites can include:

- **Sustenance:** Places of historical bounty; local and regional culinary traditions
- **Recreation:** Sport traditions such as swimming, paddling, canoeing, diving
- **Travel byways:** Heritage trails, historic path- and seaways
- **Spiritual sites:** For both Native communities and newcomers, these can be places of worship, remembrance, or prayer
- **Arts & craft traditions:** wooden boat building, photography, painting, jewelry, decorative, song, dance
- **Oral histories/legends:** Places in the water and viewsheds that are still active in the songs and stories of local communities
- **Living culture:** Native communities as well as traditional contemporary communities have lifeways that depend on their connections to the maritime source

Van Tilburg (2021) notes it is important to recognize that:

Given the disciplinary expanse of potential MCL topics...the goal of MCL implementation is not necessarily to elucidate every last possible tangible or intangible heritage resource or every last possible aspect of the cultural landscape. The goal of the MCL approach is to offer a framework, adaptable to each ONMS unit, that will comprehensively highlight the maritime cultural heritage resources, locations, and activities significant to the site's communities, for the protection of the site's resources and the resources of its associated communities. In other words, MCL implementation is undertaken with specific resource management objectives in mind, not simply initiated for inventory's sake (p.6).

The undertaking of these assessments and the information gained from them has the potential to inform additional audiences and could be a valuable tool in support of internal destination stewardship planning. A cultural landscape approach to collecting data can provide insights for education, inclusion, outreach, and accessibility content and messaging both system wide and for specific sites. In short, cultural landscapes can be a treasure chest of information for planning to engage a more diverse, inclusive, audience.

With a firm insight into value and use, an additional step that can inform destination stewardship is examining the impact of national marine sanctuaries on host/destination communities.



COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Anyone who lives in or has visited an area associated with heritage knows that the associated tourism has both pros and cons. With the increased visibility of designation comes opportunity but sometimes also onslaught. As Salazar & Zhu (2015) have noted, “the danger that tourism is promoted before preservation is great when stakeholders regard heritage primarily as an economic resource. The commercialization of heritage often focuses on the interests of tourists and tourism service providers” (p.3).

For those who do not directly benefit financially from increased visitation, there are a host of impacts that also must be considered. These, of course, must be weighed against the positive impacts for those who do benefit. Nevertheless, by designation value is increased, With increased value comes increased visitation. This impacts how communities use assets but also how the asset impacts the community.

Impacts of designation and related increased in visitation upon communities can include:

- **Loss of cultural recognition/awareness:** Native American, Native Alaskan, Pacific Island and other historically oppressed or historical, communities through non-representative tourism designations/decisions
- **Infrastructure management:** Peak season or even continual (based on the site) traffic, crowding, waste management, asset access, and parking can exact frustrating tolls on local communities
- **Pollution:** With increased visitation, and beyond infrastructure, comes the issue of increased pollution—including everything from vehicle emissions to single-use plastics
- **Loss of broader community identity:** Destination popularization can lead to an increase in commercial rents resulting in out-of-area businesses and retail chains selling goods and services not related to, not representative of, and not benefiting local communities
- **Increased housing prices:** An increase in real estate values can lead to gentrification, a lack of affordable housing options, an inability of historic communities to hold onto/afford upkeep of heirloom properties, and proliferation of vacation rentals

Understanding the specific community’s feelings of value, use, and impact can inform understanding of how communities relate to the asset. By gathering this information ONMS can more effectively determine what programs or projects it might facilitate or become a partner in that can help mitigate such impacts.

HOW COMMUNITIES RELATE

Understanding the impacts of designation can provide insight as to how communities relate to national marine sanctuaries. For some a national marine sanctuary designation may not affect their relationship to the asset in any way. For others, high season crowds for example, may cause a temporary dissociation with the asset. For still others, being part of a community which hosts a designated site may instill a sense of pride which permeates day-to-day life.

These relational associations provide further insight into how ONMS can internally consider approaches to destination stewardship planning. Relational associations can be strong points for rallying communities toward stewardship action. Providing support for initiatives that reflect relational values can enhance the agency's position as a trusted, engaged community resource.

Some examples of how communities relate to national marine sanctuaries include:

- **Sense of pride:** As has been mentioned, the designation of a local area as heritage can instill a sense of pride in its community.
- **Ancestral homelands:** While most relate to national marine sanctuaries as places of natural beauty and recreation, indigenous communities may have a deeper bond to these as familial heritage.
- **Health/Recreation:** Outdoor recreation is directly linked to physical and emotional health. Many host communities relate to national marine sanctuaries as places of health, stress relief, and enjoyment.
- **Business:** Some national marine sanctuary sites may have developed industries, such as fishing and shipping, that employ large swaths of the local population. For these communities, relating to national marine sanctuaries is both personal and professional.
- **Spiritual:** Water, the basis of life, has long been spiritually inspirational to many whether for religious, emotional, or ceremonial reasons. This deep relationship to water can be a powerful connection point.

As alluded to above, in some situations it is possible that the initial designation process may not have included all of the stakeholders within a host community. Some communities might relate to national marine sanctuaries as places where their connection has been ignored and their voices silenced by process. Engaging such communities through values-based heritage management approaches can help turn relational conversations from past negatives to future positives.

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT

Exploring and understanding how destination communities value, use, are impacted by, and relate to national marine sanctuaries forms a solid base to internally examine increased engagement opportunities. Increased insight into how communities feel about national marine sanctuaries can help answer the question, “How can we help you help us?”

“One of the characteristics of a healthy organization is the willingness to seek and listen to external feedback” (Moore, 2021, para. 1). ONMS is already well-respected for its community engagement and bolstering internal knowledge of heritage associations and valuation can further help to “communicate the System’s progress, impact, and accomplishments in a consistent manner to its stakeholders. Many stakeholders – partners and communities express a lack of clarity on its role and purpose, including its impact” (NAPA, 2021, p. 48). Increased understanding of and engagement within the community can serve as the seeds to grow stewardship opportunities, partnerships, education programs, interpretation, and communications that are more inclusive of, and applicable to, a broad variety of audiences.

NAPA (2021) also points out that:

Lack of engagement is not due to a lack of interest from the outside organizations but can be partially attributed to the fact that the System has not established or communicated a clear value proposition as to why organizations should partner with the System. A clear value proposition that defines the mutually beneficial relationship of partnering with the System can entice new groups and help expand the System’s outreach to external partners. This in turn benefits the System through the resource multipliers that the partners can provide, including in the communications arena. (p. 67)

The answer to the question of how to increase engagement is to increase understanding of mutual values. By delving into the value sets of host communities in relationship to national marine sanctuaries the System can identify areas where values align, using these to express intentions, purpose, impact, and benefits. “There is a symbiotic effect between community engagement and positive externalities; when the community embraces and cares for the sanctuary site, that investment can benefit the communities” (NAPA, 2021, p. 34). Similarly, when sanctuary management embraces and expresses care for the community impacted by the sanctuary, that investment can benefit the sanctuary.

ENGAGING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The original host communities of national marine sanctuaries are Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders for whom the waters formed ways of living, food traditions, artistic expressions, ways of communication, and methods of transportation—among many other things—for thousands of years. As such it is extremely important to focus specifically on how these ancestral communities can contribute to the stewardship process. As detailed by Van Tilburg (2021):

These are the living descendants of – and many times are themselves – people who shaped and were shaped in this maritime cultural landscape. Engagement can contribute significantly to acquiring and understanding this deeper knowledge of place, as well as offers the opportunity to engage with these communities on a topic that is not deeply mired in controversy – as many of our engagements are - but usually involve positive contributions of their family and community about which they are generally proud and willing to share. Such engagement can contribute to building stronger relationships of trust and respect between the site and its constituent communities, and promote some community “ownership” of the use of MCL as a foundational management framework for historic and cultural resources (Barr 2020) (pp.4-5).

Though many sites actively engage with Tribal and Native governments and communities regarding national marine sanctuary management there is a question of how this engagement can be furthered and amplified. It has been noted that “Engaging with these communities also recognizes their rights and interests as stewards of the resources and allows the System to integrate their traditional ecological knowledge in managing its sites most effectively, including dealing with climate change effects” (NAPA, 2021, p.67).

Recognizing these rights and interests is inherent in values based cultural heritage approaches to destination stewardship. Following the considerations outlined throughout this product, actively engaging these communities to understand how they might value, use, are impacted by and relate to national marine sanctuaries and federal management of ancestral lands and waters can foster new opportunities for partnerships as well as identify new ways to engage other historically underserved communities.

While following an approach that explores how Tribal and Native communities might value, use, be impacted by, and relate to national marine sanctuaries it is important to recognize that there must also be awareness of additional relational and historical concepts—in effect the specific Native American cultural landscape. “Using landscape as the unit of understanding ensures a full coverage of interest areas and an opportunity for presenting a holistic understanding of a place and its resources as related by affected tribal communities” (Ball et al., 2015, p. 2). Similarly, approaches must consider that more pathways to destination stewardship may be forged through the recognition that “Indigenous communities have been exceptional trustees of the biodiversity of their own environments, rather than people that need to be coerced into protectionism” (Meskell, 2012, p. 28).

Indeed, many Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities are extremely active—or would like to be—in heritage tourism and destination steward efforts. In a recent town hall meeting of the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA), participants noted the importance of creating partnerships with non-Native allies in support of disseminating respectful and accurate information about Native communities in destination tourism and stewardship activities (AIANTA, 2022).

Accuracy also rests in doing away with any preconceived notions from past research or interactions. As Alivahtzou (2014) notes, “powerful traditional practices and ceremonies transmitted from the past and reinterpreted in the present offer an alternative framework of cultural transmission that is not embedded in documentation and preservation, but in cyclical and performative processes of creation, destruction and renewal” (pp.48-49). Allowing for the regeneration and reinterpretation of the past through contemporary reappropriation can create new opportunities for connection and stewardship synergies with new and diverse communities (Alivahtzou, 2014).



SAMPLE APPLICATIONS

These two brief case studies provide an overview of how various management entities have used values based cultural heritage management strategies to develop destination stewardship plans to better understand issues and opportunities for their locations. In each, one can see how research into how communities value, use, are impacted by, and relate to heritage assets informed outcomes.

Hawai'i Tourism Authority

A major tourism destination that is popular because of its natural resources, including two national marine sanctuaries, is the state of Hawai'i. Recently the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) introduced a strategic plan for tourism management that is anchored in destination stewardship—aligning natural and cultural resource management with visitor wants and community needs.

The plan “includes attracting and educating responsible visitors; advocating for solutions to overcrowded attractions, overtaxed infrastructure, and other tourism-related problems; and working with other responsible agencies to improve natural and cultural assets valued by both Hawai'i residents and visitors” (HTA, n.d.-a, para. 2).

In consultation with community members, small businesses, and other stakeholders, the state developed a tourism plan with initiatives are organized around four pillars that support HTA's mission to “strategically manage Hawai'i tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources, community desires, and visitor industry needs” (HTA, n.d.-b. para. 1) These pillars include:

- **Natural resources:** respect for our natural and cultural resources
- **Hawaiian culture:** support native Hawaiian culture and community
- **Community:** Ensure tourism and communities enrich each other
- **Brand Marketing:** Strengthen tourism's contributions (HTA, n.d.-b)

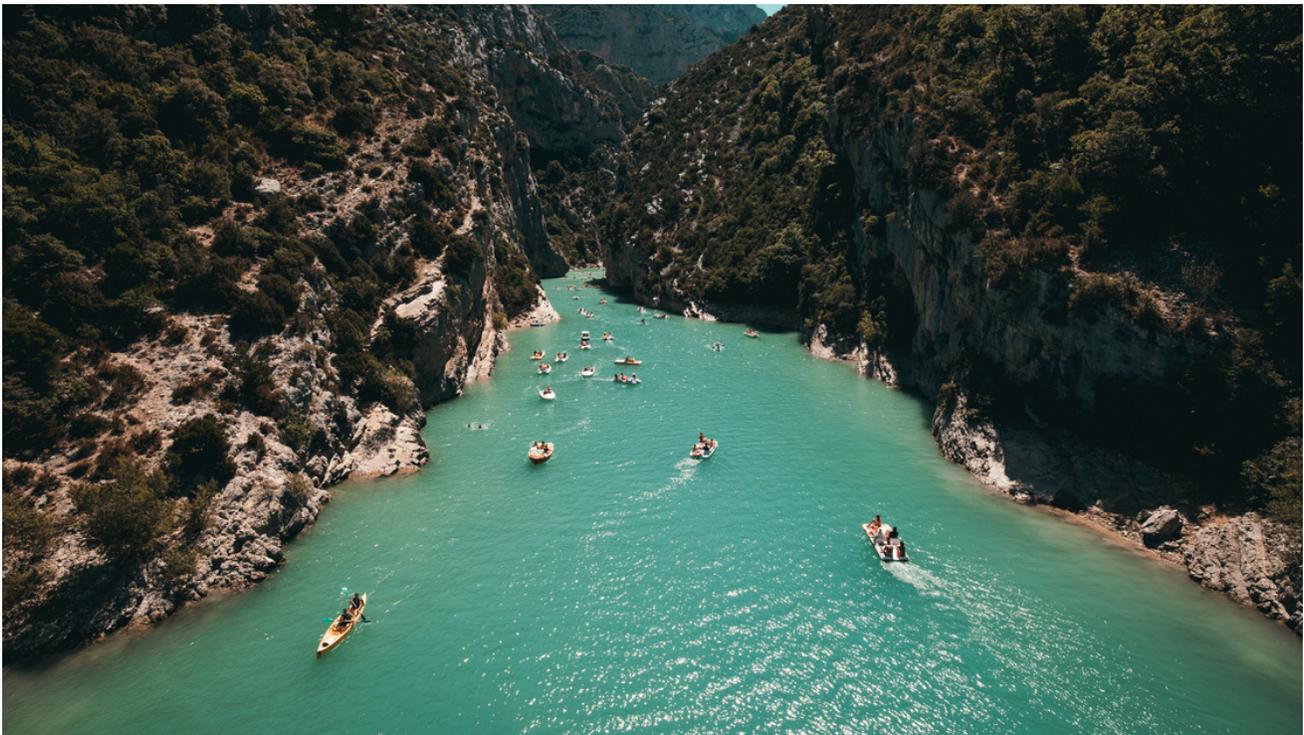
Recognizing the needs of communities in relation to tourism impacts has helped the HTA craft a strategic plan that not only considers how diverse these impacts can be, but also how powerful communities can be in helping to create mutually beneficial solutions.

Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP)

Leadership at this North Dakota National Park, in anticipation of a multitude of external resource impacts, undertook a “strategic planning process designed to incorporate a holistic understanding of visitor use with the unique needs of each of its gateway communities. Park staff were interested in the communities’ current relationships with the Park and how they could improve to provide a quality visitor experience, advance park goals, and develop and leverage partnerships” (Bricker et al., 2020, para. 3).

Working with a team from the University of Utah, Park managers undertook an “Appreciative Inquiry” (AI) destination stewardship approach to understanding relationships between the Park and its gateway communities. Specifically, the Park endeavored to understand “What was the role of TRNP related to stimulating regional tourism? What did the gateway communities need? How could tourism’s spillover benefits enhance their economic conditions and quality of life, while still upholding the purpose and values of the park?” (Bricker et al., 2020, para. 4).

Using AI and a focus on envisioning positive future outcomes versus complaints from the past, researchers engaged with community member focus groups, community leaders, and park staff to identify themes each with their own actionable items. The emergent themes included conservation awareness, tourism management, and youth engagement (Bricker et al., 2020). Management was able to create action items within each of these areas of focus to begin planning for destination stewardship partnerships that mutually benefited the Park and its gateway communities.



CONCLUSION

More than places of recreation, inspiration, and discovery, national marine sanctuaries are places of cultural and social meaning to people. The goal of this practical product is to share ideas rooted in values-based cultural heritage management to assist ONMS in further informing its internal destination stewardship strategy. As such, I hope to have succeeded in elucidating some of the many ways cultural heritage management approaches, combined with already successful natural heritage management strategies, can help build trust, encourage action, inform strategy, create experiences, expand accessibility, and bolster feelings of responsibility leading to broadened stewardship opportunities for national marine sanctuaries.



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

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*Thank you for the opportunity to serve as
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