

An Assessment of Institutional Relationships at the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary

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Thank you to all those who brought life to this project:

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Those who participated in this study - and taught us about
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This document summarizes the findings of an 18-month-long external assessment of institutional relationships at the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. The full-length report can be found at:

<http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt/pubs/projects.htm>

Introduction

Governance of marine resources is challenging. Many agencies share responsibilities for ocean health and management. Off the coast of Washington state, the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS) has set a goal of creating stronger relationships with its many institutional partners, which include federal and state agencies, tribal governments, local communities, non-profit organizations, and marine resource users.

Established in 1994, OCNMS stretches across roughly 2,400 square nautical miles. The mission of OCNMS is to protect the resource while allowing human uses that are consistent with resource protection. OCNMS conducts and facilitates research to build new knowledge of the resource and identify new stressors. OCNMS also facilitates educational programming to enhance understanding of the resource.

In 2008, OCNMS began to review and update its management plan for the first time. OCNMS solicited comments and held public meetings across the Olympic Peninsula. Workshops identified priorities for the review. After nearly three years of work, OCNMS released 2011 OCNMS Management Plan. A priority area in the plan was to achieve collaborative and coordinated management with the many OCNMS institutional partners.

OCNMS worked with a team of four graduate students from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment to conduct an external assessment of its institutional relationships. The external assessment addressed strategy CCM1 of the Final Management Plan. The 18-month assessment included interviews and a survey of key individuals within OCNMS's institutional network.



The Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, off the coast of Washington state. (Courtesy of NOAA/OCNMS)

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Highlights

- 2,408 square nautical miles (roughly the combined area of Delaware and Rhode Island)
- Diverse habitats support 29 species of marine mammals and one of the largest seabird colonies in the continental United States
- Ecologically, socially and commercially important species of groundfish, shellfish and five species of salmon

About the Assessment

The assessment sought to provide insights on the following questions:

- What is the landscape of the institutional relationships?
- How do individuals and organizations working with OCNMS define collaborative and coordinated management?
- Why do individuals and organizations work with OCNMS?
- What do individuals and organizations value about their relationships with OCNMS?
- What is working well in these relationships?
- What is particularly challenging in these relationships?
- What would individuals and organizations like to change about their relationships with OCNMS?
- What partnership areas should OCNMS pursue in the future?

The assessment was conducted through the following methods:

1. A literature review on collaboration and institutional networks in natural resource management provided context and informed the design of survey questions and the interpretation of data.
2. Semi-structured interviews with 34 individuals in the institutional network also provided context on the unique situation of OCNMS and informed the design of the survey.
3. A web-based survey of multiple-choice and open-ended questions was sent to 95 members of agencies, tribal governments, and organizations involved with OCNMS.

Factors That Facilitate Productive Collaborative Relationships

The literature on collaborative natural resource management reports a set of factors that facilitate healthy relationships. Those most applicable to OCNMS's landscape of institutional relationships include:

- Compelling focus; clarity of purpose; working toward a shared goal
- Commitment to the relationships; existence of a champion
- Existence of a regular forum for collaboration
- Effective communication
- Credibility of process and decisions; trust in the process
- Respectful relationships; feeling valued
- Sense of satisfaction; sense of accomplishment

OCNMS Institutional Relationships

Many of OCNMS's activities rely on voluntary strategies conducted through a variety of institutional relationships. The interaction is complex but necessary. Sanctuary boundaries overlap with Washington state waters and are encompassed within the legally established fishing grounds of the Coastal Treaty Tribes – the Makah, Quileute, and Hoh Tribes, and the Quinault Indian Nation – and the shoreline of Olympic National Park (see Figure 1). Other state and federal agencies also have jurisdiction over activities that occur within the sanctuary. The following is a summary of OCNMS's institutional relationships included in this assessment:

Federal Agency Institutional Relationships:

OCNMS works with the **U.S. Coast Guard** to raise awareness of and monitor vessel traffic within the “Area to be Avoided,” where shipping traffic is limited to protect sensitive ecosystems and mitigate the risk of oil spills. The Coast Guard is also the lead federal agency for oil spill response activities. OCNMS works with the **U.S. Navy**, which has used portions of the sanctuary as a training and test range for decades. The **National Park Service** at Olympic National Park shares responsibilities for management of the intertidal zone with OCNMS; the Park and OCNMS conduct joint research and educational programs. The **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** manages wildlife

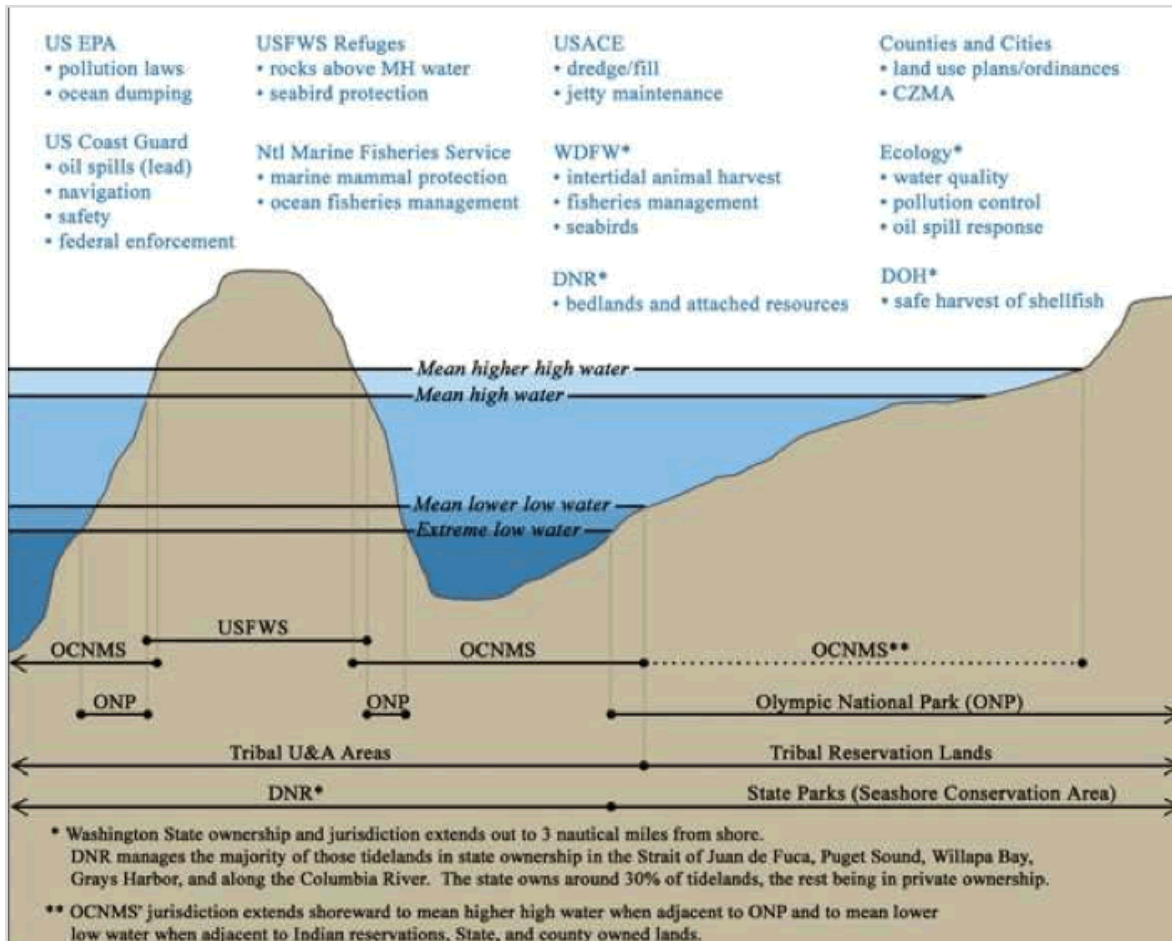


Figure 1: The jurisdictional boundaries within OCNMS. (Courtesy of OCNMS 2011 Management Plan)

refuges on a series of islands within the sanctuary, requiring collaboration to protect seabird colonies and sea otter populations in adjoining waters. The **U.S. Geological Survey** and OCNMS coordinate seafloor habitat research and mapping. Along with the Coastal Treaty Tribes, the **National Marine Fisheries Service** and **Pacific Fishery Management Council** manage 119 fishery species along the coast, including within the sanctuary.

Washington State Institutional Relationships:

OCNMS shares management of the coastline with the **Washington State Department of Ecology**; the two agencies work on oil spill response activities, and initiatives to protect environmental quality and water quality. The **Washington Department of Natural Resources** manages state forest lands in Washington State, including those on the Olympic Peninsula and also the bedlands of state waters, which lie within three nautical miles of the shore.

Tribal Government Institutional Relationships:

The **Hoh Tribe, Makah Tribe, Quileute Tribe, and Quinault Indian Nation** have treaty protected fishing rights and share co-management responsibilities for fishing activities within the sanctuary with the state of Washington and federal government. The Makah Tribe and OCNMS conduct joint interpretation activities at Cape Flattery near Neah Bay.

Local Government Institutional Relationships:

Chambers of Commerce, Marine Resources Committees, and county and city governments work with OCNMS on a variety of initiatives that affect local economies and residents.

Non-Profit Institutional Relationships:

OCNMS and the **Surfrider Foundation** host joint beach clean-ups. The **Maritime Exchange of Puget Sound**, a non-profit serving the shipping industry, works with OCNMS to warn ships about hazards, and to alert them about special regulations in sanctuary waters and to guide shipping traffic around sensitive areas. OCNMS and the **Seattle Aquarium** designed the Ocean Science Program to educate teachers, students and families about marine resources. Researchers from the **University of Washington** and other academic institutions work with sanctuary research staff to learn more about the status and health of marine resources and habitats. OCNMS Superintendent Carol Bernthal is an ex-officio member of the **Olympic Coast Alliance**, a non-profit focused on marine resources issues in and adjacent to the sanctuary.

Formal Collaborative Bodies:

Many of the institutions listed above are represented on two of the formal bodies involving OCNMS to coordinate and collaborate regarding management decisions. The 21-member **Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC)** provides OCNMS with recommendations on key issues. It includes seats for the four Coastal Treaty Tribes, federal, state and local government agencies, as well as local citizens, non-profit organizations, and members of the public who have a stake in the resource, such as commercial fishers and members of the tourism business community. The SAC does not have decision-making authority but provides advice on a wide range of marine issues, ensuring a two-way flow of information between OCNMS and the individuals or institutions interested in its management decisions. The **Olympic Coast Intergovernmental Policy Council (IPC)** was established in 2007 by the state of Washington, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Coastal Treaty Tribes. It is a new type of collaborative body that is unique among national marine sanctuaries and uncommon in the wider field of natural resource management. The IPC provides a forum for resource managers with regulatory jurisdiction over the resources within the sanctuary to enhance communication, and coordinate policies and management strategies. OCNMS participates as invited, but does not set the agenda for the IPC.

Who Answered the Survey?

Forty-three individuals answered the survey representing a broad range of institutions and groups. The survey received responses in sufficient numbers to allow for a comparison of answers from three categories of respondents: federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and council members and staff of the Coastal Treaty Tribes (see Figure 2).

The federal agency group includes members of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who do not work at OCNMS. In all, 15 federal agency, 9 non-profit and 8 tribal respondents answered the survey.

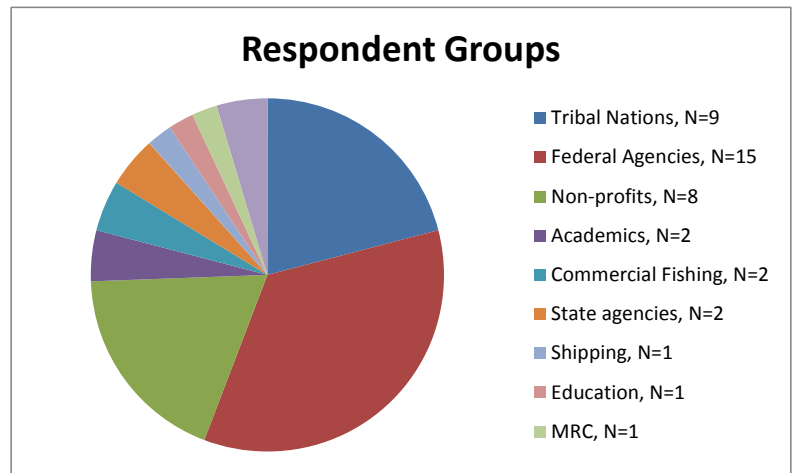


Figure 2: Survey respondents by affiliation.

Most respondents have long-term, formal working relationships with OCNMS because of their job responsibilities (see Figure 3). In addition, most have worked with OCNMS through its two formal collaborative bodies: the Sanctuary Advisory Council and the Intergovernmental Policy Council.

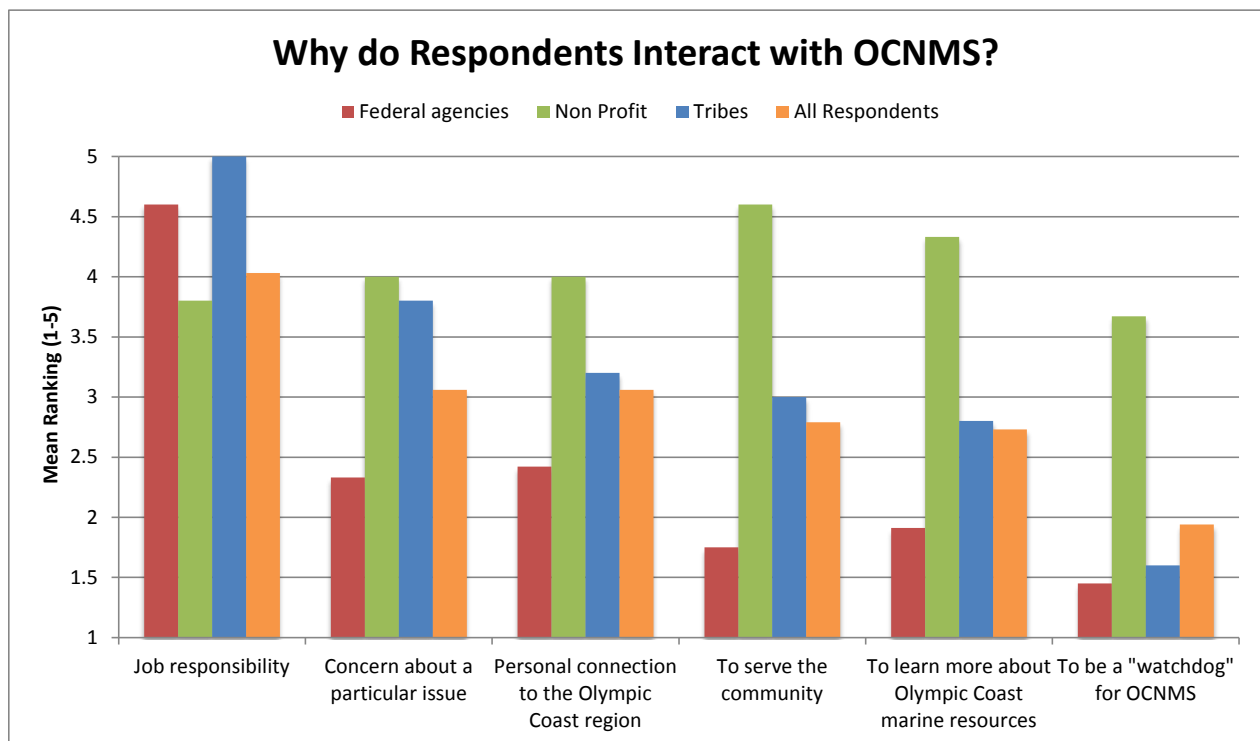


Figure 3: Mean ratings of respondent motivations for interacting with OCNMS. The survey used a scale of 1 = Not at all, 2 = Very little, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Considerably, and 5 = A great deal.

What is Going Well: Building a Strong Foundation

The assessment shows OCNMS has built a strong foundation for collaboration. Many of the intangible qualities identified in the literature on collaboration and networks that make for effective, productive and satisfying relationships are present in the relationships in OCNMS's institutional network.

Many respondents recognize that OCNMS has gone beyond its statutory requirement to maintain and enhance its institutional relationships. The SAC and the IPC provide mechanisms for collaboration and maintenance of formalized relationships with agencies and the Tribes. They appreciate these forums as a hub of information that enables the creation of a ready network. This network allows OCNMS and its partners to communicate with and receive feedback from a wide array of individuals that they otherwise would not be able to reach. The network helps OCNMS harness the resources, skills and motivations of institutional partners to achieve effective management.

Most respondents are satisfied:

Overall, the respondents who interact with OCNMS are mostly satisfied with their relationships with OCNMS. Eighty-three percent of all respondents rated their satisfaction with their relationship with OCNMS as "somewhat," "considerably," or "a great deal" (see Figure 4). On average, respondents who work for federal agencies are the most satisfied. Tribal respondents, however, are largely unsatisfied.

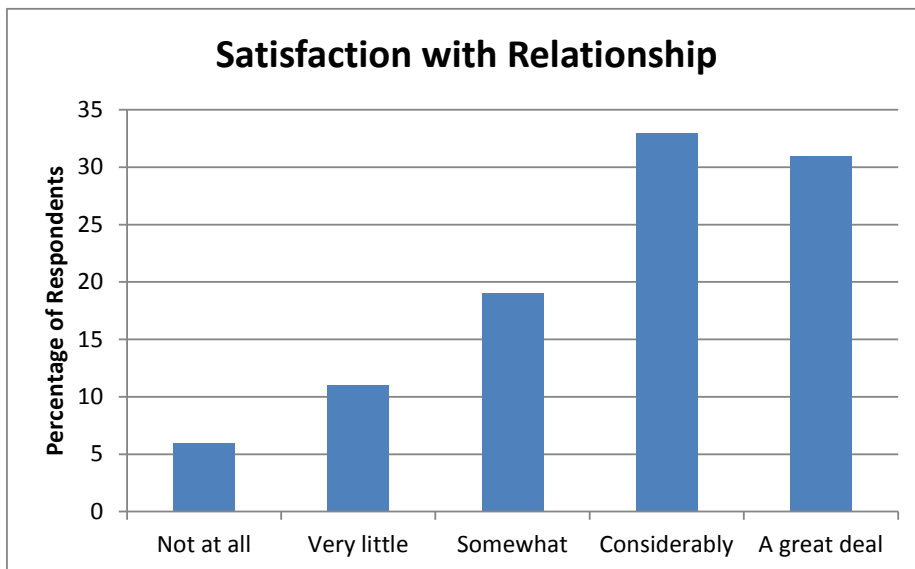


Figure 4: Respondent ratings of their satisfaction with their relationship with OCNMS.

"During my time with the SAC and OCNMS I believe that we all came to learn a lot about each other and our respective roles on the SAC. I believe that they have a much better appreciation and understanding of the importance of the marine industry and we on the other hand have come to learn more about their concerns and have been successful in meeting goals and objectives of OCNMS without creating unwarranted regulations."

--On the benefits of collaboration

Satisfaction results from a host of factors. In general, respondents perceive their relationships as being valuable. They believe they are developing new personal relationships by interacting with OCNMS. They believe they have opportunities to learn about the marine resource and they value the chance to share their expertise and priorities with OCNMS staff and others within the institutional network. Significantly, most of the respondents feel strongly that they work on issues important to their organization when they interact with OCNMS (see Figure 5).

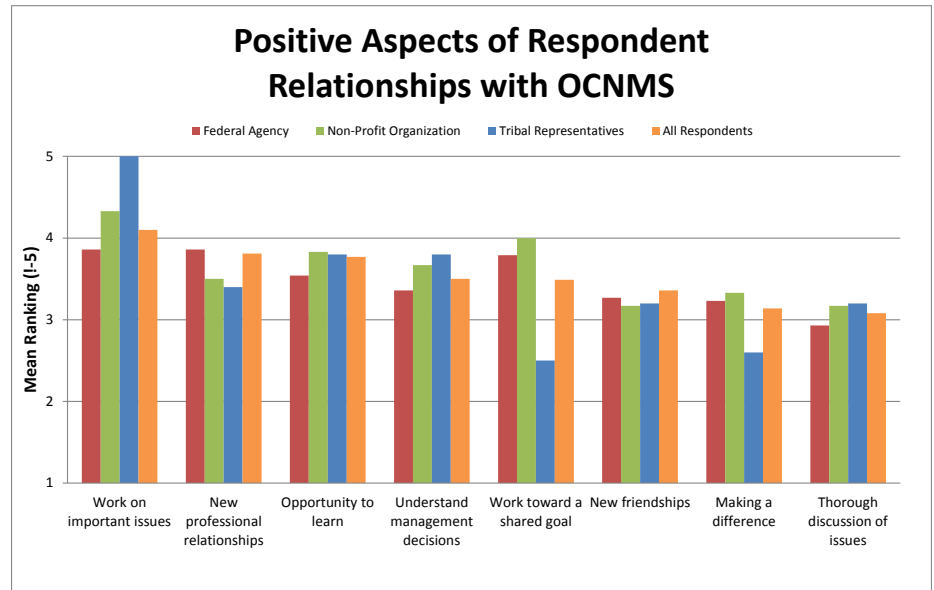


Figure 5: Mean ratings of respondents' perceptions of positive aspects of their relationship with OCNMS.

"Much of what needs to be done in the maritime arena whether it is safety or security or environmental stewardship cannot be achieved solely by one agency. Effective partnerships are vital to getting things done."

--On the importance of institutional relationships

Relationships lead to accomplishments:

Respondents recognize that their interaction with OCNMS has led to accomplishments that provide mutual benefits. In answering an open-ended question, they cited examples of policies and programs that resulted because of their interaction with OCNMS. Examples include a recently-instituted ban on discharges from cruise ships, preparations to respond to potential oil spills, creation and enforcement of the Area to be Avoided that keeps large vessels away from ecologically sensitive areas, and research projects to generate new knowledge about the ecosystem.

Respondents appreciate efforts of OCNMS staff:

The OCNMS staff received high marks from respondents. The staff are making important contributions to building satisfying institutional relationships. In answering an open-ended question on what makes their relationship with OCNMS satisfying, respondents explained in their own words that they appreciated the dedication, commitment and responsiveness of the staff. In answering a separate multiple-

choice question, most respondents also rated the staff highly in understanding their perspective, seeming committed to the relationships, respecting their opinions even during disagreements, responding to questions, and recognizing their contributions (see Figure 6). The exception was tribal respondents, who generally did not share such positive perceptions of the staff.

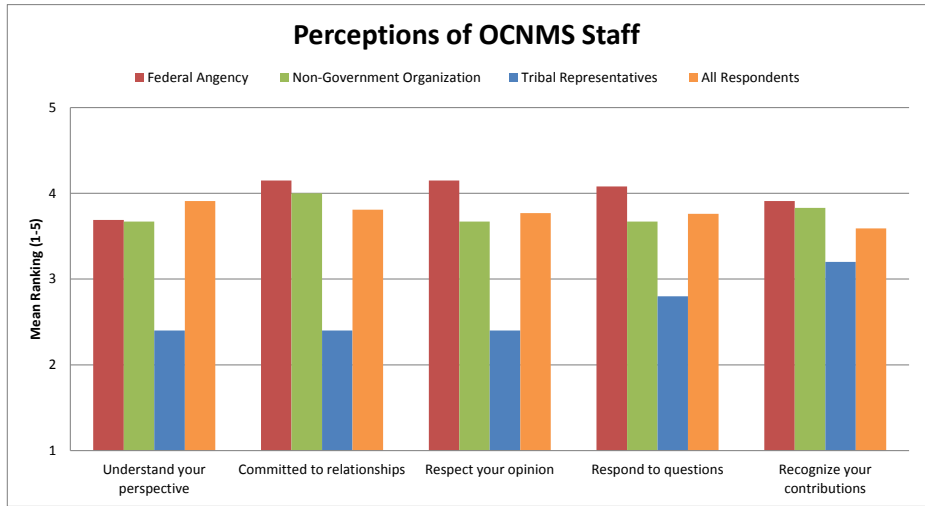


Figure 6: Mean ratings of respondents’ perceptions of OCNMS staff contributions to relationships

Respondents see OCNMS as a resource for other initiatives:

Respondents perceive that OCNMS could make a valuable contribution to many of the marine initiatives that potentially affect the Olympic Coast. A host of marine initiatives are underway or being discussed in relation to the area, from a national-scale ocean policy initiative to the creation of locally-based Marine Resources Committees. For the most part, respondents in OCNMS’s network want OCNMS to be highly involved in an initiative when it matters to the sanctuary, meaning that the initiative could affect the marine resources within the sanctuary (see Table 1). Respondents also recognized the sanctuary is part of a larger ecosystem, and think OCNMS potentially should influence those initiatives. Should OCNMS become involved, respondents commented that its role should be to act as a resource, provide advice and contribute its research and expertise.

When and Why OCNMS Should Get Involved	
Category	Frequency of Comment
When it matters to the sanctuary	67%, n=12
Because the sanctuary is part of the larger marine ecosystem	39%, n=7

Table 1: Categorized responses to potential OCNMS involvement in other marine initiatives.

“Overall staff support is good, knowledgeable, and courteous.”

--On the perception of OCNMS staff

“Generally, it [OCNMS] needs to participate to the degree that these issues or activities may impact the sanctuary; need to make sure that the sanctuary is fully considered in the bigger picture.”

--On when and why OCNMS should be involved in other initiatives

Value in climate change activities:

Similarly, respondents see value in becoming involved with OCNMS relative to climate change-related activities. Tribal respondents are particularly interested, especially in regards to climate change research and monitoring (see Figure 7).

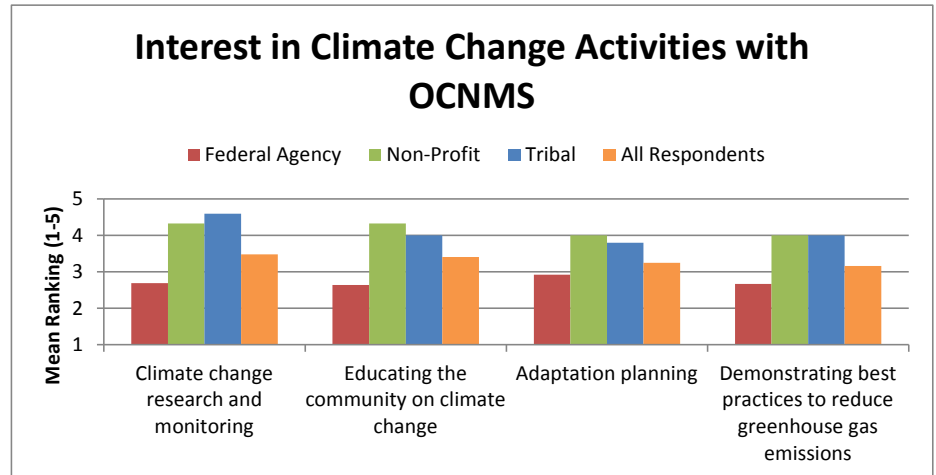


Figure 7: Mean ratings of respondents' interest in working on climate change activities with OCNMS.

Challenges to Institutional Relationships

Creating satisfying, effective and productive institutional relationships is challenging in the best of circumstances. OCNMS faces a variety of challenges. Some are often found in collaborative processes worldwide. Others are related to the unique situation of OCNMS on the Olympic Peninsula.

Geography compounds the challenges of a lack of time, money and staff:

The geography of the Olympic Peninsula compounds many of the challenges more commonly found in collaborative processes, such as constraints on time, money and staff. In response to an open-ended question on challenges, respondents wrote that the physical distance between their offices, the marine sanctuary, and the OCNMS office make face-to-face collaboration time consuming and expensive.

Different organizational cultures challenge relationships:

Relationships are challenged by differences in organizational cultures, which include how organizations make decisions, implement programs, and develop budgets and long-term plans. The challenges are partly due to the missions and procedures of different agencies. For example, Navy representatives are not permitted to share classified data even if it could be beneficial to OCNMS. OCNMS and Olympic National Park share coastline but do not have shared signage to educate visitors.

"The geographic distance is challenging. Travel time is an issue to accomplishing anything. Our organization also lacks funding and staff."

--On the challenges of interacting with OCNMS

Tribal respondents are dissatisfied:

Overall, respondents from tribal governments are dissatisfied with their relationships with OCNMS (see Figure 8). They do not feel respected in the process and they do not feel the process is available to them to influence OCNMS decisions.

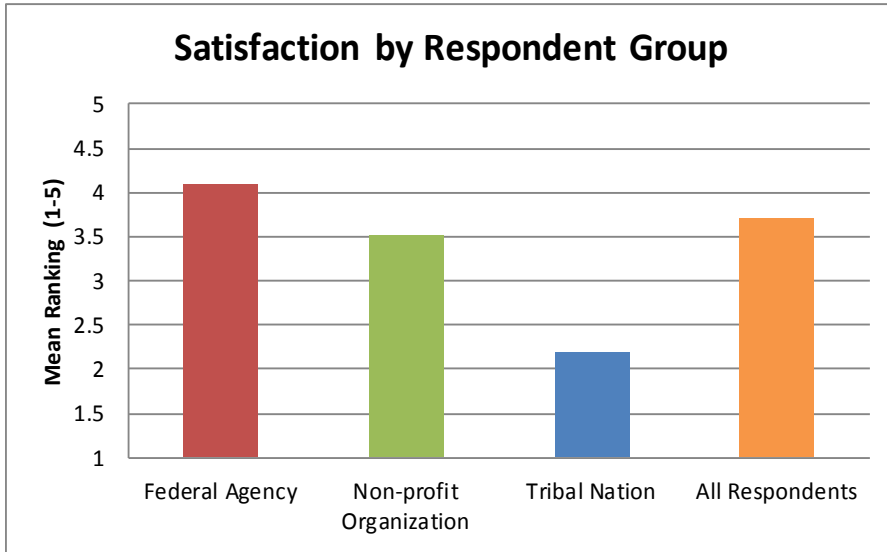


Figure 8: Mean ratings of respondent satisfaction by affiliation.

Respondents from tribal governments perceive a lack of transparency, little inclusion of their priorities into OCNMS management decisions and a failure to jointly set management goals. They do not feel they are engaged early in management decision-making processes and do not believe OCNMS staff understand their perspective. They perceive OCNMS management decisions as less credible than do respondents from federal agencies and non-profits. They also perceive they do not work toward a shared goal with OCNMS, which is a primary reason for collaboration and coordination to occur. Tribal respondents were the least likely to report that their interactions with OCNMS are making a difference.

However, the creation of the IPC is recognized and appreciated as a unique mechanism for collaborative and coordinated management with the Tribes, though it is not recognized as a replacement for government-to-government consultation. Respondents from tribal governments also want to engage with OCNMS; they place a high priority on interacting with OCNMS. Tribal respondents emphasized the need for research and management projects to be planned and implemented in conjunction with the Tribes and in alignment with tribal priorities. They suggested more in-person contact with tribal communities and more opportunities for interaction.

“When developing research priorities, in particular ‘what questions to ask’ and ‘how to answer them,’ OCNMS staff should never be alone, at their side should be the IPC science panel, in other words, the fisheries resources Co-Managers.”

--On tribal respondents' expectations of collaborative and coordinated management

“An ‘us against them’ mentality within the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and OCNMS that does not allow them to understand fishing cultures and dependence on resources.”

--On tribal respondents' perception that OCNMS does not understand their concerns

“Communication barriers limit the ability to create effective working relationships.”

--On the challenge of communication

“Collaborative to me means involving others in decision-making. Coordinated means to me that while stakeholders may not be part of the decision-making process, they know about the management decision because the sanctuary brought them into the loop. Stakeholders need to feel like they were either heard, in the case of collaboration, or had a chance to hear, in the case of coordination.”

--On the definition of collaborative and coordinated management

Communication challenges:

Respondents pointed to insufficient communication as challenging their interaction with OCNMS. They suggested more frequent updates would enable their organizations to better help the sanctuary. In interviews, they commented that OCNMS is not well known in the region, making it more challenging for them to raise awareness or concern for marine resources. In addition, respondents would like more timely information to help them become more meaningfully involved in decision-making.

Varied Expectations of Collaborative and Coordinated Management

OCNMS's institutional relationships are varied and reflect a spectrum of levels of involvement. Representatives of federal agencies, the Tribes, and non-profit organizations emphasized different definitions of collaborative and coordinated management that reflect varying expectations of their relationship with OCNMS. These different expectations affect how different respondents assess OCNMS's collaborative efforts.

Federal and state agency respondents often defined “effective collaborative and coordinated management” as working together to advance shared objectives. Agency respondents also tended to compare OCNMS's efforts to what is typical among most agencies. Relative to agency respondent expectations, OCNMS is achieving effective collaborative and coordinated management.

Tribal respondents show a desire for a deeper, more dynamic relationship with OCNMS as co-managers of the marine resources in the sanctuary. Some tribal respondents perceive collaborative and coordinated management as a way to achieve this goal, while others do not. Tribal respondent assessments of OCNMS's collaborative efforts are informed by the Tribes' legal designation as co-managers of the resource. Because of this different baseline expectation, tribal respondents were less likely to agree that OCNMS is achieving effective collaborative and coordinated management.

Non-profit organizations and other respondents with specific interests - for example representatives of conservation organizations, commercial fishing, or the shipping industry - often defined collaborative and coordinated management as working together, but with a heavier emphasis on stakeholder input and frequent communication. Non-profit respondents had a wider range of

assessments of OCNMS's collaborative efforts.

These different expectations present a challenge for OCNMS. From the perspective of agency respondents, OCNMS's efforts are very satisfactory, even exemplary. From the perspective of tribal respondents, OCNMS's efforts are unsatisfactory. In addition, the perspectives of those within OCNMS's network vary depending on the issue or activity of focus. The different perspectives not only affect whether they perceive OCNMS as achieving collaborative and coordinated management, but also their perceptions of what OCNMS is doing well and what challenges OCNMS's relationship-building efforts.

Next Steps to Improve Institutional Relationships

Continue to support the OCNMS staff:

Institutional relationships rely on interpersonal relationships and the survey showed the OCNMS staff are instrumental in facilitating partners' satisfaction with their relationships with the sanctuary. OCNMS staff have tough jobs. They have to balance other duties while working with institutions with sometimes conflicting priorities. Recognizing the staff in a meaningful way rewards hard work and provides motivation for them to continue their efforts.

Continue to support the Intergovernmental Policy Council:

The IPC is clearly a unique collaborative body in natural resource management, and it is recognized as such by the tribal representatives who participate. Participants take pride that the IPC provides an opportunity for collaboration in which tribal priorities and voices can have a resounding influence. Continue to support the IPC, recognizing that creating new institutional arrangements takes time. Like other new endeavors, it may encounter unexpected bumps in the road.

Seize opportunities to build bridges with the Tribes, particularly through research:

Although the Tribal respondents are dissatisfied with their relationships with OCNMS, there are opportunities to build bridges. The Tribes want to engage with OCNMS, particularly in relation to research. To the extent possible, involving tribal staff or other tribal representatives in the details of the development of research proposals may enhance feelings of trust, credibility in management decisions and of being respected in the management process.

Share the dilemma with partners:

Creating a more effective relationship ultimately requires each party to share its perceptions of the relationship and discuss what might be done on both sides to improve it. OCNMS has an opportunity to use the findings of this study to spark conversations with its partners and the Tribes, perhaps at a venue such as a meeting of the SAC, the IPC or with individual tribal nations. Approach the conversations as a chance to focus on the shared problem of how to build more effective relationships, with a focus on defining mutual expectations for collaborative and coordinated management and partners' specific suggestions for improvement.

Track institutional relationships:

OCNMS is not part of one collaborative group, but a network of ongoing, evolving interactions with various partners, issues, and relationship goals. By using portions of this project's survey, OCNMS can gather data on the constantly changing landscape of OCNMS's institutional network. In addition, a regularly administered survey would track OCNMS's progress toward its goal of effective collaborative and coordinated management. Useful multiple-choice survey questions could include: what issue areas respondents work on with OCNMS, whether the factors that facilitate effective and productive relationships are present in their relationship with OCNMS, and how satisfied they are with their relationship with OCNMS. Useful open-ended survey questions could include: how respondents' organizations, OCNMS, and the resource have benefited from the relationship and respondents' suggestions for improvement.



Image: Cape Flattery (Photo Credit: Eric Roberts)



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