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## Mallows Bay-Potomac River National Marine Sanctuary

The system of National Marine Sanctuaries presently comprises 13 sanctuaries and a national monument ranging in size from a fraction to 1000's of square miles. The sanctuaries are administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in partnership with local, state, and nonprofit agencies.

Through hard work by a dedicated coalition, with support from fishing groups, civic and environmental organizations, and many citizens, the nomination for a Mallows Bay-Potomac River sanctuary has reached the scoping stage, when the public is invited to inform decision makers about what they'd like the sanctuary to be.

Note: the nomination *endorses fishing*.

### Expanding the boundaries

A number of groups and individuals have expressed an interest in expanding the boundaries of the sanctuary to enhance its goals of promoting fishing, recreation, education, research, and tourism. With public support, expanded boundaries could be considered in the alternatives analysis of a required Environmental Impact Statement for the sanctuary.

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### Sanctuaries are NOAA Sentinel Sites

“National marine sanctuaries are where monitoring and research take place to enhance our understanding of natural and historical resources and how they are changing, and provide an early warning capability to detect changes to ecosystem processes and conditions. In that sense they are what we call "sentinel sites" and are focal points for both the scientific and resource management communities.”\*

Extending the boundaries will greatly enhance the sanctuary's value as a sentinel because it will then contain the transition from brackish (mesohaline) water to tidal freshwater. This especially rich ecosystem is where, e.g., the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of striped bass eggs are produced in the Chesapeake Bay. Sub-estuary watersheds would range from Nanjemoy's highly forested "reference" to Mattawoman's, where warning signs of urbanization are seen as a faltering of its famous anadromous fish nursery. The sanctuary would be uniquely suited to monitor ecosystem response to shifts in brackish boundaries and marsh flooding expected with sea-level rise.

\* <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/sentinel-site-program>



[www.mattawomanwatershedsociety.org](http://www.mattawomanwatershedsociety.org)

Photos: Paula Schiller, Jim Long



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### The benefits of expanded boundaries



Mallows Bay



Mattawoman  
Creek



Port Tobacco R



Nanjemoy Creek





# A National Marine Sanctuary on the Nation's River

A National Marine Sanctuary contributes to building a stronger, more resilient future for America's communities, ecosystems and economy. It is a place of inspiration. Within its waters and along its shores, you can find vibrant tapestries of marine life and ancient mysteries of our past.\*

*Expanding boundaries from Chapman to Chapel Pt State Parks greatly amplifies opportunities for education, research, & tourism*



Expanded area is *perfectly* suited for:

- **Education**
  - Leverage many ongoing programs
- **Heritage & nature tourism**
  - Example: 1<sup>st</sup> 'aircraft carrier' with spy balloons launched from barge off Mattawoman in Civil War
  - Revitalize Indian Head through tourism & a visitor center to relieve rural Mallows Bay of crowding pressure
  - John Smith water trail
  - Extensive tidal-freshwater marshes; 'Breadbasket marshes' & lotus in Mattawoman
  - Ghost fleet of Mallows Bay (of course!)
- **Research**
  - Baseline fisheries research in hand, esp. for Mattawoman & thru Potomac seine surveys
  - Tidal freshwater globally uncommon, and where many migratory marine species spawn
  - Hotspot for spawning by striped bass & other migratory-fish
  - Sensitive lab for predicted saltwater shifts, sea-level rise
  - Nanjemoy a forested reference
  - Ideal sentinel site (see back)