



Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology

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Mr. David Alberg
Sanctuary Superintendent
100 Museum Drive
Newport News, VA 23606

March 18, 2016

Mr. Alberg,

The Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology (ACUA) would like to submit comments in support of the proposed boundary expansion of the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary (MNMS). For more than 50 years, the ACUA has been at the forefront of underwater archaeology and has worked tirelessly to preserve and protect our shared maritime heritage worldwide. The ACUA serves as *the* international advisory body on issues relating to underwater archaeology, conservation, and submerged cultural resources management. It works to educate scholars, governments, sport divers, and the general public about underwater archaeology and the preservation of underwater resources.

The proposed MNMS expansion options offer diverse and powerful opportunities for NOAA to share the maritime heritage of the North Carolina coast with a larger audience than the one currently able to visit the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary. The expansion of the sanctuary offers the opportunity to provide protection to shipwrecks that are currently unprotected due to a patchwork of laws regarding underwater cultural heritage. Additionally the potential opportunity to protect and study maritime cultural landscapes, lighthouses, and shipwrecks would allow NOAA to tell an inclusive holistic story about North Carolina's maritime past.

Underwater cultural heritage, maritime cultural landscapes, and historic structures provide a tangible link to the United States' collective past. Providing access to historic and cultural resources must remain a component of NOAA's plans for the MNMS expansion. The shipwrecks encapsulated within the four current sanctuary expansion options are well known sites for tourism and recreational diving in eastern North Carolina. Divers from around the globe and across the United States come to eastern North Carolina for the shipwreck diving. Any plan for expansion must take into account the opportunity to provide access to the sanctuary sites and educate a passionate and vocal stakeholder about the value of North Carolina's maritime past. The ACUA would encourage NOAA to engage and promote the recreational diving community's access to these world class sites.

The expansion of MNMS as it currently stands will require additional research and study of the sites that fall within the sanctuary regardless of the option chosen. MNMS staff archaeologists have already studied several shipwrecks within the proposed expansion area, and dive slates been created. This baseline data will allow NOAA and their partners an opportunity for regular site monitoring, and a chance to monitor the biological organisms at each location. The ACUA encourages NOAA to actively pursue the opportunity to treat other wrecks within the expanded sanctuary sites as archaeological sites worthy of the same level of care and study as the USS *Monitor*. Current public outreach regarding the MNMS by NOAA staff offers a widely palatable understanding of the vessel and its place in our collective history. NOAA's demonstrated track record with public education will allow the same level of public outreach about the new sites held within the new MNMS boundaries in the public trust.

In summation, the ACUA supports the expansion of the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary. The expansion provides necessary protections to understudied and underrepresented sites along the North Carolina coast. We hope that the proposed expansion provides even greater access to these valuable sites, and creates an opportunity for more Americans to discover their maritime heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kimberly L. Faulk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "K".

Kimberly L. Faulk, MA
Chair, ACUA