

# *Frolic Cove Project*



## Inventory of Features - Resource Summary and Recommendations for Classification and Naming

April 2008



**California State Parks  
Mission**

To provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

Photo on reverse: Pieces of the *Frolic* and its cargo lie on the ocean bottom offshore of Point Cabrillo.



# *Frolic Cove Project*

## Inventory of Features - Resource Summary and Recommendations for Classification and Naming

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Photo on reverse: A diver examines a fragment of Chinese porcelain while working on the *Frolic* site mapping project.

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Project Description .....	1
Marine Area Natural Resources .....	2
Meteorology .....	2
Geology .....	2
Marine Life .....	2
Cultural Resources .....	3
Archaeological Resources .....	3
California State Lands Lease to California State Parks .....	5
Recreation Resources .....	6
Interpretation and Education Resources .....	6
Aesthetic Resources .....	6
Potential For Future Land Acquisitions .....	7
Classification Alternatives .....	7
State Marine Cultural Preservation Area .....	7
State Marine Park .....	7
Recommendation .....	8
Unit Name .....	8
Recommendation .....	8
Public Input .....	9
Proposed Declaration of Purpose .....	9
Proposed Declaration of Purpose .....	10
Selected References .....	11
BACK SIDE: Figure 1: Overview Map, and Offshore Features .....	14
Project Contributors .....	15
Photo Credits .....	15
Figure 1: Overview Map, and Offshore Features .....	13



## INTRODUCTION

On June 7, 2004 California State Parks entered into a 25 year lease agreement (No. PRC 8535.9) with the California State Lands Commission for approximately 83 acres of tide and submerged lands in the Pacific Ocean adjacent to Pottery Cove, north of Point Cabrillo in Mendocino County. The purpose of this lease was for the establishment of an underwater preserve with the potential classification as a “State Marine Cultural Preservation Area” for the 1850 *Frolic* shipwreck. The *Frolic* (California-MEN-1947H) lies in the shallows of Pottery Cove, a rocky inlet situated just north of Point Cabrillo. The shipwreck site is of national significance through its association with the California gold rush and the American China trade. The *Frolic* is also significant because of the rarity of this type of vessel, and for the archaeological remains of the vessel itself and its cargo that rest on the ocean floor. The *Frolic* shipwreck site was nominated and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

California Public Resources Code Section 5002.1 requires that a summary of the natural and cultural features be provided to the California State Park and Recreation Commission when classifying or reclassifying a California State Park unit.

The unit’s Inventory of Features (Resource Summary) is intended to provide the commission with necessary information of classification as specified in Article 1.7 of the Public Resources Code.

This summary describes significant natural and cultural resources and provides an overview of the project area. Information contained in this document has been compiled from various reports and field investigations. It will be useful to the Department in developing resource policies and resource management programs, and as background information for land use planning, park maintenance, interpretation and operations.

Based on studies, research and public input, California State Parks recommends that the 83 acres be named and classified as ***Frolic* Cove State Marine Cultural Preservation Area**.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project area comprises 83 acres immediately offshore of the Pacific Coast, just north of Point Cabrillo. Point Cabrillo is approximately two miles north of the town of Mendocino and eight miles south of the city of Fort Bragg. On the eastern edge of the property is Point Cabrillo Light Station and Preserve, and the small community of South Caspar. Primary access to the property is from Point Cabrillo Drive, which is a semi-loop road off Highway 1. Two other State Park units, Russian Gulch State Park and Jug Handle State Natural Reserve, are within three miles of Point Cabrillo (see Figure 1, “Overview Map, and Offshore Features”).

The area includes *Frolic* Cove, also known as Pottery Cove, site of the 1850 shipwreck of the *Frolic*. The shipwreck site, one of the best preserved mid-nineteenth-century shipwrecks in California, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. *Frolic* Cove is a rocky cove surrounded by steep bluffs, adjacent to a small sand beach. Water depths range from sea level to over 60 feet. Scholarly research has been done in the

cove on the shipwreck, and abalone and sea urchin management. The cove's resources have great potential for further research, education, interpretation, and recreational diving.

## **MARINE AREA NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **Meteorology**

The climate of the Mendocino coast is Mediterranean, moderated by marine influences. Winter rains and cool, dry summers with frequent coastal fog characterize the climate pattern. Annual precipitation is approximately 40 inches along the coast. Point Cabrillo extends into the ocean, creating a microclimate that generates higher intensity wind and rain.

### **Geology**

The area is of geological significance, as a sunken terrace and terrace escarpment occur seaward of the five terrestrial terraces which are of international geological and biological significance. Point Cabrillo is in a tectonically active region where elevating marine terraces, oscillating sea level and active seismicity combine to provide a dynamic and scenically pleasing coastal setting. A small but visible fault (unofficially referred to as "Lighthouse Fault") connects the two coves on either side of the lighthouse, and a 6 foot displacement can be observed. It is unknown when the last movement occurred on this fault, but it is possible that movement on the San Andreas Fault which parallels the coast three to four miles off shore could trigger movement on Lighthouse Fault.

The prominent feature of the intertidal area along the project area is the vertical bedrock bluff. The prominent underwater geological features are ridges, surge channels and large boulder blocks (see Figure 1, "Overview Map, and Offshore Features"). The ridges and channels are often parallel to the coastline and frequently form shallow near-shore wash rock reefs.

### **Marine Life**

Several surveys have been conducted in the marine environment off of Point Cabrillo. The following discussion is based on information provided in California Department of Fish and Game reports and a 2003 survey report by Phillip Buttolph and John DeMartini.

Approximately half of the project area is within the existing Point Cabrillo State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) (see Figure 1, "Overview Map and Offshore Features"). The SMCA is an important Department of Fish and Game survey site for red sea urchin, *Strongylocentrotus franciscanus*, and red abalone, *Haliotis rufescens*. Data from dive surveys at the site have resulted in several publications which have contributed to the management of abalone and urchin. The hard bottom areas in the SMCA have been extensively mapped, and contain complex, high relief habitat for nearshore fish and invertebrates representative of the surrounding areas. This SMCA is one of the few along the entire coast where commercial fishing is allowed but recreational fishing is prohibited. Surveys indicate that red urchin abundance is greater within the area than in adjacent areas open to both recreational and commercial fishing.



Most of the intertidal areas are very steep, some being vertical cliffs. Wave energy is strong enough to pummel the sea cliffs resulting in erosion down to the bedrock in most areas. Intertidal life is highly affected by the exposed nature of the coastline in this location. The upper intertidal zone along this area has relatively few marine species and numbers of individuals, as compared to coastal areas afforded more protection from storm events. Periwinkles and limpets are present, but not in large numbers. The middle intertidal zones in the area vary from steep to horizontal within a relatively short intertidal distance. Tide pools are uncommon and shallow. Common species in this zone include acorn barnacles, ribbed limpets, and checkered periwinkles. California mussels and Pacific goose barnacles are also common. Sea palm is common in aggregations within the mussel beds. The lower intertidal zone encompasses areas normally only exposed by minus tides or when there is an extreme shore break of waves. Kelps are the primary producers in this zone. The signature species of high exposure sites is the perennial kelp. Wing kelp, five ribbed kelp and feather boa kelp occur in greater abundance in more protected areas (see Figure 1, Overview Map and Offshore Features, for kelp forest areas). Purple sea urchins occur in the area, and red abalone are abundant grazing along the base margins of channels and larger boulders. Giant sea anemones are also abundant in patches.

Less is known about the fishes in the area than the other marine life due to the types of surveys conducted to date. However, the area is known to provide habitat for a wide variety of rockfish. Lingcod, kelp greenling, china rockfish, copper rockfish, and striped surfperch were reported in the 2003 study.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

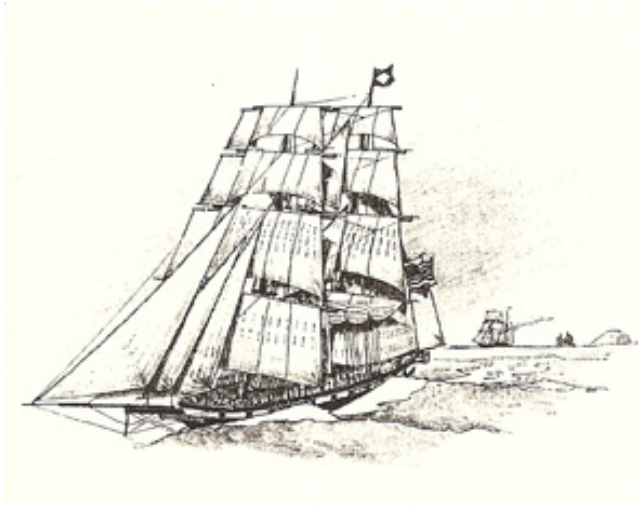
### **Archaeological Resources**

The brig *Frolic* ran aground on a submerged reef and sank off the Mendocino County coast on July 25, 1850. It was on the final leg of its trip to San Francisco, having sailed all the way from China with 135 tons of cargo. The ship and its cargo of Chinese goods destined for the market in San Francisco were lost beneath the turbulent seas. The *Frolic* wreck now lies in Pottery Cove just northeast of the Point Cabrillo Lighthouse. The *Frolic* is a unique gold rush era cultural resource, and its sinking is a particularly interesting story that involves many of the major events of mid-nineteenth-century California. The *Frolic* site was nominated and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

#### Historic Euroamerican Background

The captain of the ill-fated ship was Edward Horatio Faucon. Faucon had also been the captain of the *Pilgrim*, whose voyages were made famous in Richard Henry Dana's classic book *Two Years Before the Mast*, an account of the early days of Yankee trading along the California coast. As captain of the *Frolic*, Faucon was under the employ of the Heard Company, a nineteenth-century Boston-based enterprise. The ship and its cargo had departed Hong Kong on June 10, 1850 with 26 officers and men aboard. Their cargo included Chinese silks, ceramics, wooden trunks, furniture, flatware, a prefabricated house, art, ale, and other sundry items (Layton 1997).

Captain Faucon, using an antiquated nautical chart and unfamiliar with the north coast waters, underestimated his nearness to the rocky shore as the *Frolic* approached the



Artist's rendering of what the *Frolic* possibly looked like in 1850

California coast. With little warning, the *Frolic* was suddenly too close to shore and became caught in large swells. The brig struck an underwater reef, now known as Faucon Rock. Captain Faucon, in an attempt to save the ship ordered the helm turned hard to port, but the waves drove the vessel backwards stern first, breaking her rudder and hindering the ship's ability to maneuver. The waves forced the ship broadside to the huge rock. The breakers soon cracked its hull and it began taking on water. Faucon, realizing the *Frolic* was lost, ordered the two longboats lowered and abandoned ship. Six men apparently refused to board the longboats. All the cargo and

the six men were left behind with the sinking ship. Captain Faucon eventually made his way south along the coast to Fort Ross and finally to San Francisco, where he reported the loss of the ship and all its cargo (Layton 1997).

In the detailed account of the incident that Faucon gave the ship's owners, he stated there was little time to save the cargo, and that the ship sank in eight to ten fathoms (c. 50 to 60 feet) of water on the outside of the reef rocks approximately 1½ miles off shore. In 2003, an underwater survey of the *Frolic* conducted by Dr. Sheli O. Smith of the PAST Foundation, under contract with California State Parks, found the wreck much closer to shore than expected. It lay in shallower waters than initially reported by Faucon, and at unusual angle relative to the normal prevailing summer swell. These facts make it likely that Captain Faucon changed his story somewhat from what really happened, probably because the "difference between running aground in the shallows and sinking in deep water was all about salvage, insurance and preservation of human life" (Smith 2005:27). It is more likely that the *Frolic* was not taking on water as fast as he recounted once the ship was disabled, and that Faucon was able using his light wind sails to direct the floundering vessel toward shore. Faucon, a savvy veteran seaman, knew that few questions would be raised if the ship was said to have sunk in deeper water rather than in the relatively shallow water of Pottery Cove. This strategy worked: the insurance companies did not find the ship un-seaworthy nor the captain and his crew negligent, and the policies for the ship and its cargo were paid in full (Smith 2005).

Word of the wreck spread quickly among the few people who lived near the rugged Mendocino coast. What remained of the *Frolic* and her cargo was salvaged, first probably by the *Mitom* (the local band of Northern Pomo Indians) and later by others living in the Russian River region. In the summer of 1851, a passing government Indian interpreter noted items from the cargo in the home of a local Yankee settler. The interpreter described seeing huge china jars, trunks, and lacquered ware in a house that was built of poles and adobe (Layton 1997). Later attempts to salvage the *Frolic*'s cargo were made by Jerome Ford, an agent representing a San Francisco lumber dealer. He



Pomo man in head dress, c. 1924

did not find her cargo, but instead discovered vast virgin forests of redwood and Douglas-fir. As a result, the first lumber mill was established on the north coast of California in 1852. Once all that could be salvaged was taken, the *Frolic* soon passed from memory into what Layton calls “the more durable fabric of folklore” (Layton 1997: 146). What was not carried off now rests just offshore in water as shallow as nine feet deep. The shipwreck lay untouched until the mid 1950s, when it was first found by a local diver. This was followed by several more independent discoveries of the wreck in the 1960s, leading ultimately to it being known throughout the diving community of the California coast. Unfortunately this notoriety has resulted in a great deal of “treasure hunting,” with the consequence being the loss of potentially significant historical information and the collection of thousands of artifacts of all kinds, including structural items of the ship itself.

The submerged remnants of the *Frolic* are an important relic of one of the most significant and formative socioeconomic periods in California history. In July of 1850 the California gold rush was in full swing. San Francisco, once a sleepy Spanish outpost, was fast becoming a major metropolitan center with tens of thousands of “Argonauts” arriving and departing for the Mother Lode country of the Sierra Nevada. The story of the *Frolic* and its cargo captures that period of explosive growth in what was very soon to become the 31<sup>st</sup> state, a time when Anglo-American, Hispanic and Native cultures collided. In the summer of 1850 the Mendocino coast and most of northern California was still occupied by Native peoples. The wreck of the *Frolic* and the account of how its cargo was salvaged by the local Pomo people brings into bold relief the ultimately disastrous effects the influx of miners would bring to the Indians of northern California. The *Frolic* encapsulates what state historian Kevin Starr has called a “protean and transformative” event—the gold rush—in a way that is unexpected and significant for this area so far removed from the gold fields and the mining towns of the Sierra foothills. The *Frolic* is also an important historic resource for its connection to the birth of the timber industry in northern California, and the changes that industry wrought to the region.

### **California State Lands Lease to California State Parks**

In 2004 California State Parks entered into a 25-year lease with the California State Lands Commission. This lease encompasses approximately 83 acres of tide and submerged lands in the Pacific Ocean adjacent to Pottery Cove. The purpose of the lease is for the establishment of an underwater preserve with potential classification as

a “State Marine Cultural Preservation Area” as provided in Chapter 7, section 36600 *et. seq.* of the Public Resources Code, for the 1850 *Frolic* shipwreck and to allow information collection for cultural resource protection. The lease is to be used to provide enhanced public enjoyment, preservation and protection of the *Frolic* shipwreck, as well as for other cultural and natural resources.

## RECREATION RESOURCES

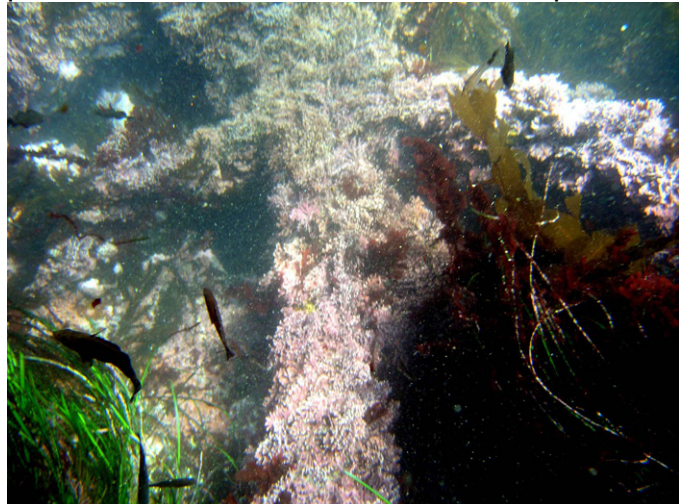
For the sport diver, this site offers the opportunity to experience first-hand a nineteenth-century shipwreck site. Although the superstructure of the ship itself has been devoured by the nutrient rich waters of the cove, the anchors and artifacts from the cargo remain visible. Other items, such as portions of the windlass, ballast, and copper sheathing, are also still visible. These, along with the variety of ceramics and glass often found in concretions, all afford the diving public a window to the past. All of these items can be interpreted underwater and/or onshore for the benefit and education of the park visitor.

In addition to the cultural resources, the park offers the recreational diver an experience of the diversity of marine life off the California coast.

## INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION RESOURCES

The wreck of the *Frolic* has already been the basis of an archaeological field school, exhibits, lectures, school curricula, a History Channel program, and even a theatrical performance. The site, its history, and its artifacts have great potential for further education and interpretation use.

Potential interpretive opportunities include providing history and marine life information for sport divers, and onshore interpretation of the *Frolic* and the cove’s marine life. Educational opportunities include further archaeological partnerships with nonprofits and universities, and onshore education programs based on the *Frolic*’s history and archaeology. The strong connection to California at the time of the gold rush ties especially well with fourth grade history and social science content standards.



The *Frolic*’s anchor, photographed during mapping project.

## AESTHETIC RESOURCES

A visitor approaching *Frolic* Cove may first be aware of the weather: the Mendocino coast varies between lashing rains on many winter days to cool fog in much of the summer, interspersed with cool or mildly warm days on which the sky displays a deep, clear blue. The sound of the ocean may be sensed next. *Frolic* Cove is rugged, and waves can be rough. The crash of wave against coastal bluff reaches the ears long before the hearer reaches the ocean, especially after a winter storm. At the cove, the



ocean color mimics the hue of the sky. The bluffs rise about forty feet above the small beach, almost vertical at points. Plants grow over the edge and down the side like a casually-designed rock garden.

A diver entering the underwater world of the cove will sense all this and more. The water is cold, almost as cold in summer as in winter, and entering it even in a wetsuit is a shock. Waves on the surface translate to surge below, swaying the kelp and the diver back and forth. The sound of the surf is muffled and muddled by the water, and mixes with the sound of the diver's own sucking in and bubbling out of breath.

All around are bright algae, sea urchins, giant anemones, and other subsurface life, in shades of pink, red, orange, green, brown, black, and purple, covering the surface of the many rocks and reefs. The shipwreck site is in shallow water, and rays of sunlight filter down. Examining the life-clad forms, the diver realizes that some have a regular, human-made aspect, and begins to recognize an anchor, a windlass. On the dark cove bottom there is a shimmer of white and blue—pottery sherds. After noticing the first few, the diver becomes aware that much of the floor is carpeted with the sherds, and that others have become embedded in the life on the rocks and artifacts. It's fascinating and a little eerie to be surrounded with what remains of the 1850 shipwreck: the bits of the brig and its cargo that traveled from China and almost reached California gold rush settlers, only to end up scattered in the cove. A school of silvery surfperch flashes past, while rockfish move with slow grace on the bottom. The cold forgotten for the moment, the diver explores this mix of the natural and manmade, the past and the present, until air gauge and dive timer indicate it's time to slowly surface and return to the shore world.

## **POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE LAND ACQUISITIONS**

There are no potential future land acquisitions related to this area.

## **CLASSIFICATION ALTERNATIVES**

### **State Marine Cultural Preservation Area**

Public Resources Code definition - [PRC § 36700 (d)] - nonterrestrial marine or estuarine area designated so the managing agency may preserve cultural objects or sites of historical, archaeological, or scientific interest in marine areas.

PRC 36710 (d) - In a state marine cultural preservation area, it is unlawful to damage, take, or possess any cultural marine resource. Complete integrity of the cultural resources shall be sought, and no structure or improvements that conflict with that integrity shall be permitted. No other use is restricted.

### **State Marine Park**

Public Resources Code definition [PRC § 36700 (b)] - nonterrestrial marine or estuarine area that is designated so the managing agency may provide opportunities for spiritual, scientific, educational, and recreational opportunities, as well as one or more of the following:

1. Protect or restore outstanding, representative, or imperiled marine species, communities, habitats, and ecosystems.

2. Contribute to the understanding and management of marine resources and ecosystems by providing the opportunity for scientific research in outstanding representative or imperiled marine habitats or ecosystems.
3. Preserve cultural objects of historical, archaeological, and scientific interest in marine areas.
4. Preserve outstanding or unique geological features.

PRC 36710 (b) It is unlawful to injure, damage, take, or possess any living or nonliving marine resource for commercial exploitation purposes. Any human use that would compromise protection of the species of interest, natural community or habitat, or geological, cultural, or recreational features may be restricted by the designating entity or managing agency. All other uses are allowed, including scientific collection with a permit, research, monitoring, and public recreation, including recreational harvest, unless otherwise restricted. Public use, enjoyment, and education are encouraged, in a manner consistent with protecting resource values.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the lease with the California State Lands Commission and the inventory of natural and cultural resources presented in this document, the Department recommends that the 83 acres of leased tidal and submerged lands be classified as a State Marine Cultural Preservation Area.

The State Marine Park classification encompasses the protection and management of the marine communities, habitats and ecosystems. This is not the focus of the lease. A State Marine Conservation Area already exists over portions of the 83 acres.

The Resource Agency's Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) planning process considers the North Coast planning area. It is scheduled to be evaluated between 2010 -2011. The Resource Agency and the Fish and Game Commission would probably not consider any designation that restricts fishing until their MLPA public involvement process is conducted.

PRC 36725 (b) states that the California State Park and Recreation Commission cannot designate a State Marine Park without the concurrence of the Fish and Game Commission. They can designate a State Marine Cultural Preservation Area.

### **UNIT NAME**

The name *Frolic* Cove is used by many of the locals and docents in describing the area. Pottery Cove is the historic name of the cove where the *Frolic* shipwreck lies. In considering the names used in the past, current names, and the natural and cultural history of the area, the following names were considered:

- *Frolic* State Marine Cultural Preservation Area
- *Frolic* Cove State Marine Cultural Preservation Area

### **Recommendation**

The Department recommends the name ***Frolic* Cove State Marine Cultural Preservation Area** for this leased unit of California State Parks for these reasons:

- General Usage - The public is already familiar with the location known as “*Frolic Cove*.”
- Sense of Location - The name “*Frolic Cove*” refers to the location of the shipwreck
- Sense of Expectation – A park visitor has the expectation of seeing a cove with cultural features.
- Historic Name – Although the name Pottery Cove has been used historically, it is not identified on topographic maps as such. It is an unnamed cove on topographic maps.

*Frolic* State Marine Cultural Preservation Area is not recommended because it does not give a good description of the location of the cultural feature. Although the 83 acres is a larger area, this classification focuses on the shipwreck.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

On February 28, 2008 a public meeting was held at the Russian Gulch State Park Recreation Hall from 6:30 to 8:30. The public was notified through a press release in the local papers, the *Mendocino Beacon* and *Fort Bragg Advocate* and on local radio stations. The press release was also distributed by the Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association Executive Director, Jim Kimbrell, to all their members and volunteers. Twenty-six people attended the meeting. Over half of the attendees were volunteers of the Point Cabrillo Lightkeepers Association. Karyn Gear, a representative from the California State Coastal Conservancy, was also present.

The attendees were unanimous in supporting the name “*Frolic Cove*.” In regards to the classification, there was confusion. The majority of the attendees would prefer more protection for the natural resources in the cove, and liked the idea of classifying it as a “State Marine Park”. Given the situation, the majority thought that classifying it as a “State Marine Cultural Preservation Area” was the first step. It would provide increased awareness and protection of the shipwreck. They would like the Department of Fish and Game to consider designating a larger area around the shipwreck as a “State Marine Park” in the future.

This issue was brought before the California State Park Planning, Policy and Programming Committee (PPPC) in March 2008. After a brief presentation by the Mendocino District and discussion by the Committee, PPPC recommends the name “*Frolic Cove* State Marine Cultural Preservation Area.” This decision was based on three factors:

1. *Frolic Cove* identifies the commonly known location of the shipwreck.
2. The lease agreement identifies the potential classification as a “State Marine Cultural Preservation Area.”
3. The name provides increased awareness and protection to the shipwreck.

## **PROPOSED DECLARATION OF PURPOSE**

The Declaration of Purpose defines the purpose of a park unit, and outlines broad management goals. It establishes long-range management objectives consistent with

the unit classification. The following Declaration of Purpose is proposed for *Frolic Cove* State Marine Cultural Preservation Area:

**Proposed Declaration of Purpose**

The primary purpose of Frolic Cove State Marine Cultural Preservation Area is to protect and preserve the Frolic shipwreck, and provide for the public's enjoyment of the site and marine environment. The natural resources of the cove, plus any additional significant cultural resources that are discovered, shall be protected.

The Department of Parks and Recreation will protect, manage and interpret the natural and cultural resources and values of the State Marine Cultural Preservation Area, and provide appropriate programs, facilities and opportunities for public use consistent with preservation of the resource values.



## **SELECTED REFERENCES**

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**Figure 1: Overview Map, and Offshore Features**

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(Insert Figure 1 here. Caption above needed for figures list below table of contents.)

**BACK SIDE:      Figure 1: Overview Map, and Offshore Features**

## **PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS**

This project was made possible through the valuable and concerted efforts of the following:

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## **PHOTO CREDITS**

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