

“USS *Monitor*: Discovery and Preservation”

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The USS *Monitor* was the first national marine sanctuary and it was designated to protect a *cultural* resource. Mr. Johnston gave a brief background on the history of the ship’s recovery.

The ship was a Union ironclad; a very innovative warship that used a rotating gun turret.

NOAA wanted to preserve it, but had to locate it first; used side-scan sonar (one of its first applications) and found the ship 16 miles out, in international waters. These were tough waters to work in, where the Gulf Stream and Labrador Current collide.

Partnerships with the U.S. Navy and the Mariners Museum were very important.

Mr. Johnston reviewed how they stabilized the ship; then installed an engine recovery structure over the wreck. Attention then focused on the turret; it was lifted with a large “spider” onto the platform of the Naval vessel.

Once it was transported to the museum, priorities were to: first document it, conserve it in saltwater, then protect it. It is considered a premier Civil War attraction, locally and around the world.

The site of the shipwreck was off of “Diamond Shoals,” also known as the graveyard of the Atlantic.

NOAA staff and Navy divers continue to work at the wreck site to document what’s left. Future dives and recoveries are planned.

Hurricane Isabel hit this site hard and rendered great damage. Such natural events are a management issue for NOAA, with regard to long-term disposition of underwater cultural treasures.