

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
MARINE PROTECTED AREA "NEED CRITERIA" FOR THE MONTEREY BAY
NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY (MBNMS)

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed the many documents involved with this agenda item. The GAP believes that there are many criteria that should be considered when considering permanent closures of any area to fishing activities.

The GAP wishes to address the process that is being employed by the Sanctuary staff and advisory groups for this determination of a need. First of all, an implied final decision that marine protected areas (MPAs) are necessary is premature. Since fishing is the only activity being banned then it is a fishery management action. If a desire to alter current fishery management regulatory measures is desired then it must be done under the authority of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and National Marine Fisheries Service.

The GAP believes that the following criteria must be followed in the priority order as listed:

1. Baseline socioeconomic and ecosystem studies must be completed prior to any determinations. This must be done to determine if further economic constraints can be tolerated without losing any fishing economic value, and more importantly, capital infrastructure. Morro Bay is an example of fishing community economic collapse that needs to be avoided.
2. Council authority and involvement is crucial to this process. Fishing regulations are developed by the Council. It is mandated by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This council is also where fishery expertise resides. If a truly collaborative, transparent and objective approach is desired then the council must be involved in every step of the process when fishing issues are involved.
3. A statement of desired status of any select sanctuary site must be made. A scientific and social analysis must occur in order to justify this preferred outcome. An MPA is only a tool to achieve a change in status. Many other tools exist which may be able to provide an acceptable and or identical result. All options need to be considered.
4. A realistic time line needs to be established. Apparently no prior consultation with fishery management authorities has been done as to their time requirements needed to process this action request. One month is not sufficient time for the Council analysis and comment on actions needed for a management proposal of this magnitude.

In summary the GAP wishes to comment on apparent biases that exist within the Sanctuary culture. This appears to be a drive to further restrict fishing. No other human impacts are being considered for constraints. There are numerous existing MPA's within the sanctuary. It may be that protection from fishing has become excessive. The Sanctuary could consider a vibrant, profitable, and sustainable fishery as a valuable sanctuary asset. This could be an asset that deserves protection. A fishery such as this would have a very high intrinsic value as well as provide cultural value for future generations. We would hope that fisheries will not have to become an economic shipwreck within the Sanctuary.

PFMC

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