

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON EXPANSION OF GULF OF FARALLONES AND CORDELL BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARIES (NMS)

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) heard from Ms. Lisa Wooninck about a proposed action by the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Banks National Marine Sanctuaries (GFNMS), (CBNMS) to expand boundaries of each.

The GAP believes that the relationship of the two mentioned sanctuaries with the fishing industry has been good over time. However, based on negative interactions with other sanctuaries over the years, the GAP has concerns about the future evolution of the National Marine Sanctuary Program.

The GAP can find no compelling reason for an expansion of any sanctuary on the west coast. One example is the protection from mineral extraction. A sanctuary is not necessary for this protection to happen. Currently Senator Barbara Boxer has Senate Bill #S45, The West Coast Ocean Protection Act of 2013 under consideration in Congress. This bill has language to prevent oil drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf for the entire west coast. The need for upwelling protections at Pt. Arena is not clearly defined. Pt. Arena is just one of many upwelling areas along the west coast. The GAP is unclear which activities would be prohibited within the sanctuaries. There is particular concern with the regulation of maintenance of port infrastructure, especially dredging and disposal of spoils. A sanctuary is not the only tool for ocean protection.

This expansion proposal cannot be supported due to the following unresolved issues:

1. Fishery management authority.

This has been and will remain ambiguous until the Magnuson-Stevens Act and/or National Marine Sanctuary Act are reauthorized or amended with language clarifying authority over all managed marine species. The scientific expertise for conserving, managing, and regulating fisheries within the Exclusive Economic Zone is found within the state and Federal fishery management agencies

2. Creation of no-fishing zones through sanctuary authority.

This is a fishery management action and should only be allowed through the authority of the relevant Federal and/or state fishery management processes.

3. Protection vs. harvest of ocean resources.

Fishery management standards should dictate what level of protection is accorded concerning marine species currently under management.

4. Existing protections and management.

A thorough analysis is needed to quantify existing protections and management to determine whether there is a need for additional. All regulatory protections and authorities need to be part of this analysis.

An additional comment on funding needs to be addressed. Is there sufficient federal funding for this expansion, present and future? The GAP is concerned about the decline in funding for all marine management. Would the funding for this issue potentially result in even less available for fishery management?

PFMC
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