

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
MARINE RESERVES IN THE CHANNEL ISLAND NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) was briefed by Mr. Sean Hastings and Dr. Satie Airame from the Channel Island National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) about ongoing efforts to create a network of marine reserves within the Sanctuary's boundaries. The SSC first considered the contents of the Facilitator's Report (Exhibit E.2, Supplemental Attachment 3), which has been provided to the Sanctuary Advisory Committee (SAC) in lieu of a consensus recommendation by the Marine Reserves Working Group (MRWG). The Facilitator's Report highlighted a number of areas of substantial agreement among members of the MRWG (e.g., a general statement of the problem, issues of concern, goals and objectives, and implementation recommendations). However, the MRWG was unable to reach consensus on a number of important issues, including 1) the size of reserves, 2) the location of reserves, 3) the use of "limited take" areas, 4) the phasing in of reserves, and 5) the importance of fisheries management outside of reserves. The divergence in opinion within the MRWG, with respect to reserve size, led to a range of alternatives between a 12%-24% area set aside. Because the MRWG could not reach a unanimous consensus, the SAC is now charged with forwarding a recommendation to the Sanctuary manager for action.

The SSC was impressed with the depth of thought that has gone into the process thus far. In particular, the formalized effort to balance the various stakeholders' concerns should provide robust solutions to differences among user groups. It is clear that a thorough consideration of issues has been completed, particularly with regard to the development and reconciliation of siting criteria. The SSC believes the process, as it has evolved, could prove useful in future efforts to establish marine reserves elsewhere, including areas under Council authority. However, the infrastructure required to undertake a similar process is substantial and would require a significant allocation of scarce Council resources.

In response to the Council's and SSC's request for more information following the April meeting (see Exhibit E.2, Attachment 1), Mr. Hastings and Dr. Airame provided the SSC with many of the scientific papers that were considered by the Sanctuary Science Panel in reaching its determination that a 30%-50% area set aside was required to meet fishery management objectives within the CINMS. However, the conclusions one might draw from that body of literature are largely predicated on loose or negligible controls on fishing effort outside of reserve boundaries, a situation unlike that on the West Coast of the United States. In fact, an evaluation of the costs and benefits of effort versus area controls on fishing is lacking in the documentation provided thus far. This is a key issue since the Council has recently imposed highly restrictive controls on fishing effort in the groundfish fishery and, as a consequence, the necessity of 30%-50% area set asides for the purpose of managing groundfish species is not obvious. At the request of the SSC, Dr. Airame agreed to provide further documentation on how the Sanctuary Science Panel arrived at its conclusions regarding reserve size. For its part, the SSC expressed a willingness to establish an *ad hoc* committee at the direction of the Council, specifically to evaluate the justification for large marine reserves to achieve fisheries management objectives for Council fishery management plan species.

The SSC has also received a draft report on the socioeconomic effects of alternative reserve options and has requested that it receive the final report, once it is completed. The SSC socioeconomic subcommittee will review that report, once it is received.

It is very important that further dialogue continue between representatives of the CINMS and members of the Council family. The extensive groundwork that has already been laid could provide the framework for future efforts by the Council to establish marine protected areas of its own. Although the amount of reserve area under consideration by the Sanctuary is relatively small, the action is precedent setting and a thorough consideration of issues is warranted.