

Subject: Marine Protected Areas

From: Paul Michel <Paul.Michel@noaa.gov>

Date: Thu, 26 Jul 2007 16:05:26 -0700

To: Rod Mcinnis <Rod.Mcinnis@noaa.gov>, Donald McIsaac <Donald.McIsaac@noaa.gov>, Mark Helvey <Mark.Helvey@noaa.gov>

CC: William Douros <William.Douros@noaa.gov>

Rod, Mark, and Don,

One of the more pressing priority challenges I face as the new Superintendent here at MBNMS is the issue of marine protected areas in sanctuary waters. It is a complicated and controversial issue as you all very aware, but one in which the sanctuary program has an inherent interest and responsibility. Moreover, there is mounting pressure here to respond to the demand for and question of MPAs. I have been thinking about this issue a lot and have decided to initiate a process to gather input on the "need question."

I wanted to provide you with a copy of the attached letter addressed to the members of the Sanctuary's Marine Protected Areas Working Group. As you may know, over the last five years the Sanctuary has been convening a stakeholder working group to discuss the utility and potential design of MPAs. The group has made significant progress in some areas, but has not been able to come to consensus on the basic threshold issue of whether MPAs are needed. This letter lays out a process that we will be following in order to reach a decision on the need for MPAs in federal waters of the Sanctuary. In order for MBNMS/NMSP to reach a decision on need we will be meeting with groups of MPA Work Group stakeholders over the coming months, and asking for the advice of our Sanctuary Advisory Council in December. It is envisioned that we would make a decision on need at the February SAC meeting. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you anytime over the coming months to discuss MPAs and how to best communicate and coordinate on this issue. Thank You,

Paul

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Paul E. Michel - Superintendent
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
299 Foam Street
Monterey, California 93940

July 26, 2007

Dear Marine Protected Areas Working Group Member:

As you know, for the last five years the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's (Sanctuary) MPA working group has been meeting to discuss the potential for new MPAs in federal waters of the Sanctuary. We appreciate the time and effort you have given to this process. Your input has been invaluable. We have made significant progress in implementing the action plan that the working group created. This includes identifying conservation goals, compiling data, developing support tools, and analyzing particular areas of interest. Perhaps most importantly, the members of the group have gained an understanding and appreciation for the expertise and the perspectives of the others at the table. We are now however, at the point where additional progress will require further guidance, more focused discussion, and ultimately a decision on the need for MPAs in federal waters.

To date, we have focused on resource and use evaluations, which was where meaningful progress could be made. These discussions educated us all on Sanctuary habitats, resources, use patterns, and the role MPAs may play in achieving Sanctuary goals. At the last meeting in April, you were given a chance to draw on that knowledge and state your own conclusions regarding the need for new MPAs in the federal waters of the Sanctuary. That input was highly valued, but it underscored the fact that agreement on the need for MPAs in the Sanctuary is probably unattainable. In order for us to reach a conclusion on this important issue, we will be reviewing your past input and considering the possible need for additional information.

Over the next two months, we will schedule separate meetings with the working group constituents, the fishing community, environmental groups, and the science community to discuss the issue of the need for MPAs in the federal waters of the Sanctuary. We recognize that some may not feel that they fit into one of these groups and we will work to ensure that we hear these additional perspectives as well. In addition, I will be asking the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) for advice on this issue during a two-day meeting in early December.

The first day of the December SAC meeting will be largely devoted to the SAC receiving input from the MPA working group members on the need for MPAs. We encourage those presenting to the SAC at this meeting to discuss the need for MPAs in the context of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act and the MPA working group's goals. The SAC



will be asked to provide its advice to the Sanctuary on the second day of the meeting. In order to facilitate SAC discussion and advice, we ask that a written summary of working group member presentations be available to circulate 10 days prior to the meeting.

With the benefit of the work conducted over the last five years, stakeholder presentations, and the SAC's advice, we will reach a decision on the need for MPAs in the federal waters of the Sanctuary. We hope to present this decision at the February SAC meeting. Should we conclude that there is a need for MPAs, the SAC will be asked for advice regarding next steps.

We will contact each of you to discuss the details of this approach and to address questions and concerns that you may have. We appreciate the contributions that each of you have made during this process and ask for your continued participation and thoughtful input. Should you have any questions please contact Huff McGonigal at 831-647-4254.

Sincerely,


Paul Michel
Superintendent

cc: Sanctuary Advisory Council Members