



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
299 Foam Street
Monterey, California 93940

March 19, 2008

Dear Members of the Pacific Fishery Management Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to share two letters I provided to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's (MBNMS) Advisory Council (SAC) at their February 15 meeting in Half Moon Bay. I am providing these letters to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to inform you of the MBNMS's decision to consider using MPAs for additional marine resource protection and to seek the Council's advice on how to best collaboratively shape a process for identifying and assessing MPAs in the Federal waters of the Sanctuary. The MBNMS considers the Council an essential and valuable partner in managing our shared marine resources.

The main letter I submitted to the SAC summarized the three principle reasons behind the need for MPAs in the federal waters of the MBNMS: 1) to preserve especially unique and rare areas in their natural state for future generations; 2) to establish areas where natural communities and ecological processes are restored and maintained; 3) to establish research areas to better understand those natural communities and ecological processes. The second letter I presented to the SAC addressed draft process principles and timing for identifying and assessing MPAs in the Sanctuary.

While this decision comes after years of public process and stakeholder input, much work remains ahead. In the near term, MBNMS staff will be asking the SAC, the Council, and other resource managers and experts for input on how to ensure an effective and timely public process for this initiative. In addition, we welcome advice on how best to coordinate with the Council prior to engaging via formal consultation requirements under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act.

Over the long term we would like to keep the lines of communication open in our evolving partnership, from leadership to staff, to improve coordination. We are dedicated to seeking avenues of effective coordination, as exemplified by bottom contact closed areas implemented by the Council to meet shared goals and objectives to protect habitat areas within the Cordell Bank, Monterey Bay, and Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuaries.

In deciding to move ahead, the National Marine Sanctuary Program is committing to dedicate the resources necessary to fully capitalize on the community's continued input as well as to adequately understand the ecological and socioeconomic impacts of any proposed action. Any action proposed by the MBNMS to specifically designate MPAs in the Sanctuary will be accompanied with a full environmental analysis per the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Administrative Procedure Act.



The public depends on us to provide coordinated marine resource management. Thank you again for your valuable time and advice.

Sincerely,



Paul Michel
Superintendent