



MONTEREY BAY
AQUARIUM

May 21, 2008

Mr. Donald K. Hansen
Chair, Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Re: Support for the Process to Implement Marine Protected Areas in the Federal Waters of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Dear Chair Hansen and Members of the Pacific Fishery Management Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the use of marine protected areas (MPAs) as ecosystem protection tools in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The Monterey Bay Aquarium strongly supports moving forward with a process to develop and implement MPAs in the Federal waters of the Sanctuary.

Since opening in 1984, the Monterey Bay Aquarium has introduced more than 40 million people to the marine wildlife and natural communities of California's central coast, which is one of the world's most remarkable marine ecosystems. In 1992, Congress recognized this spectacular assemblage of marine life as a national treasure and established the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary to protect and conserve it. All National Marine Sanctuaries serve a unique role in providing comprehensive conservation and management of special areas of the marine environment. This role is especially critical today as ocean ecosystems everywhere, including those along California's coast, are increasingly threatened by a wide range of impacts, including climate change.

When properly designed and implemented, MPAs are effective tools for restoring the health and enhancing the resiliency of ocean ecosystems. In 2007, the Monterey Bay Sanctuary embarked on a thoughtful and rigorous effort to determine the need for MPAs in the offshore waters of the central coast. This effort included consideration of current stakeholder and scientific input, in addition to substantial data and information amassed over the previous five years by members of the Sanctuary's MPA working group. The need for MPAs was affirmed by Superintendent Paul Michel in a February 15, 2008 letter to the Sanctuary Advisory Council; Michel and his staff expounded on the rationale for this decision in a follow up letter to the Council dated April 15, 2008, which includes the following objectives for the use of MPAs:

1. Preservation of unique and rare areas in their natural state for the benefit of future generations;
2. Preservation of areas where natural ecosystem components are maintained and/or restored;
3. Designation of research areas to differentiate between natural variation versus human impact to ecological processes and components.

We support these objectives as they are closely aligned with the statutory goals of the National Marine Sanctuary Act and are critical to the successful, long-term protection of ecosystems in the Monterey Bay Sanctuary. The effort to create MPAs in the Federal waters of the Sanctuary will also complement and potentially amplify the benefits of the existing MPA network in state waters developed as part of California's Marine Life Protection Act Initiative.

We appreciate the steps the Sanctuary is taking in this process to consult with the Pacific Fishery Management Council, NOAA Fisheries, and other regulatory and resource management agencies. Fisheries based closures are currently used in Sanctuary waters to help achieve fisheries management objectives, which include rebuilding overfished populations and protecting essential fish habitat. As stated in the April 15 rationale document, there is a clear distinction between the use of these closures to achieve sustainable production versus the use of MPAs to meet ecosystem conservation objectives. We support the Sanctuary's intent to work with the Council to leverage existing fisheries management measures that may partially contribute to the Sanctuary's goal of ecosystem protection.

We look forward to working with the Monterey Bay Sanctuary, the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and our fellow community members in this important process, which we believe will help us achieve healthy and productive ocean ecosystems for the benefit of entire central coast region.

Sincerely,



Ed Cassano
Deputy Director, Center for the Future of the Oceans
Monterey Bay Aquarium