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Dr. Donald Mclsaac
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220

**RE: September 13, 2009 Council Meeting
Item C.1: Marine Resources Public Opinion Polls**

Dear Dr. Mclsaac:

I am writing on behalf of Ocean Conservancy with regards to two public opinion polls commissioned by the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries (ACSF) and conducted by Responsive Management earlier this year. For several years Ocean Conservancy has represented the conservation community on the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council and our staff has served alongside fishing representatives and other stakeholders on both the Sanctuary's Marine Protected Area Work Group and the State of California's Marine Life Protection Act regional stakeholder groups. We are therefore very familiar with marine protected areas (MPAs) and the issues addressed in the ACSF commissioned public opinion polls. I have had the opportunity to review both polls in detail and offer the following comments.

In summary, the polls provide some useful information about public views on ocean management generally. **The basic take home message of both polls is that public support for ocean protection, for marine protected areas, for sustainable use of ocean resources, and for improved protection of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is extraordinarily high.** Unfortunately many of the questions posed in both polls are either biased in their formulation, presenting a "false choice" to the survey respondents or cover issues that require more information than can be conveyed in the short span available during a telephone survey. Public responses to very similar questions vary significantly in percentage points further demonstrating the unreliability of relying unduly on specific responses to individual questions. While these flaws undermine the usefulness of the polls, the public's strong support for improved ocean protection is evident in the poll results overall.

Nationwide Survey of Public Opinion on the Management of Ocean Resources

The biggest flaw with the national poll is that many of its questions are premised on a false policy choice – the choice between managing the ocean to allow at least some kinds of human use in some areas and allowing “no human use” at all.¹ Given that there is no policy effort directed at disallowing all human uses of the ocean, this formulation seriously undermines the usefulness of the whole series of questions that follow.

In spite of this flaw, the national poll shows overwhelming public support (94%) for ocean protection². Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed agree with the statement: “Some U.S. ocean water areas should be fully protected with no human use allowed.”³ Seventy percent of survey respondents that agree that some U.S. ocean water areas should be fully protected with no human use allowed continued to support closed areas “even if sustainable use is possible.”⁴ Fully 55% of respondents agreed with the statement that “some U.S. ocean water areas should be fully protected from all human use, including sustainable harvest of fish and seafood, even if it reduces the ability of the U.S. to supply seafood to U.S. residents.”⁵

Monterey Bay Area Residents' Opinions on the Management of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Like the national poll, the Monterey Bay area poll suffers from a fundamental bias. Question 10 of the poll sets up a false dichotomy by asking respondents to choose between managing sanctuary resources primarily to “‘preserve’ the ocean resources, which means not letting humans use or extract the ocean resources” and “‘sustainable use’, which means managing the use or harvest of the ocean resources in a way that does not permanently deplete or damage the resources.”⁶ There is not now, and has never been, any suggestion in any policy venue that the sanctuary would be managed to disallow all human use. Unfortunately, the extreme bias reflected in this question taints the results of all of the questions that follow.

In spite of its flaws, the fundamental conclusion of the Monterey Bay Area poll is that the public overwhelmingly supports improved protection of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Fully 93% of poll respondents support designation of sanctuaries⁷, nearly two third (64%) believe that sanctuary managers should have the power to make rules to

¹ Responsive Management, 2009. Nationwide Survey of Public Opinion on the Management of Ocean Resources. Questions 32-38; 41-45; 47-48.

² *Id.*, Question 19.

³ *Id.*, Questions 41-45.

⁴ *Id.*, Questions 47.

⁵ *Id.*, Question 60.

⁶ Residents' Opinions on the Management of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Question 10.

⁷ *Id.*, Question 9.

prohibit human use of the designated sanctuaries⁸, and fully 68% say it is somewhat or very important to “create additional MPAs where fishing is restricted or banned for the primary purpose of ensuring that some areas of the ocean are in a more natural condition.”⁹

Conclusion

I urge the members of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council to read the ACSF polls in their entirety. Given the polls' many flaws, I would urge caution in reliance on the results of individual poll questions in any policy setting. That said, the basic results of the ACSF polls demonstrating strong public support for additional ocean and Sanctuary protection are consistent with both past public opinion polls and the extensive public input received by the Sanctuary during the public scoping and environmental review process for the recently completed Sanctuary Joint Management Plan Review process. During that process, the Sanctuary received more than 10,000 public comments in favor of marine protected areas.

Moving forward I encourage the Pacific Fisheries Management Council to work closely with the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary on efforts to improve protection of the living marine resources that are under the shared jurisdiction of both entities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 831-425-1363 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Pacific Ecosystem Protection Program Director

⁸ *Id.*, Question 15.

⁹ *Id.*, Question 46.