



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE

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

August 25, 2011

Mr. Dan Wolford
Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Dear Chairman Wolford:

Thank you for the opportunity to inform the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) about Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary's (MBNMS or sanctuary) Ecosystem-based Management (EBM) Initiative. The last time I appeared before PFMC in September 2009, MBNMS was pursuing a marine protected area (MPA) planning process for federal waters. After careful consideration of the feedback we received from federal, state and local partners and stakeholders, MBNMS staff recognized there were promising opportunities to meet the objectives originally articulated for MPAs, as well as complementary objectives important to our partners. In recognition of these opportunities, and the emerging EBM tools available to NOAA, we transitioned in 2010 from a planning process focused solely around MPAs to the EBM Initiative, which will consider multiple tools, including but not limited to MPAs, to achieve the broader goal of improving ecosystem health in the sanctuary.

Within this overarching goal, there are four major objectives of the EBM Initiative:

- 1) Maintain and/or restore marine ecosystem health and function;
- 2) Ensure protection of unique and/or rare features of the sanctuary;
- 3) Facilitate research to differentiate between natural variation and human impacts; and
- 4) Facilitate ecologically and economically sustainable uses, including fisheries, in the sanctuary.

To achieve these objectives, the EBM Initiative will continue to use a transparent, collaborative, science-based approach, following a basic three-step process: 1) Information gathering and analysis through scientific assessments and workshops; 2) Evaluating, proposing, and implementing strategies, policies, and actions with partners; and 3) Monitoring, assessing, and adapting management actions. During all stages of the Initiative, stakeholders will be able to provide input. MBNMS will work closely with partner agencies to develop proposed actions and to integrate with various partner planning processes and management decisions related to the sanctuary.



Over the past year and a half, we have been focused on the information gathering stage of the EBM Initiative (as shown in the timeline below). We have worked closely with scientists from NOAA Fisheries on the California Current Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (with a nested MBNMS IEA); explored sustainable use alternatives such as a proposed halibut trawl area within the Monterey Bay and a Monterey community supported fishery; consulted with the recreational boating community; and hosted one workshop on facilitating research and a separate workshop on protecting unique and/or rare features in the sanctuary. Our information gathering has highlighted the importance of research for understanding how ecosystem processes influence the California Current and the sanctuary. Many of the research questions and data needs that are being identified by the EBM Initiative are likely complementary to those of the PFMC, particularly as you develop a Fishery Ecosystem Plan. Therefore, we seek the PFMC's advice on how to best collaboratively address joint research and information needs related to ecosystem-based management.

Timeline for Information Gathering Stage of EBM Initiative

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Primary Tool</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Lead</u>
Ecosystem Health	IEA/ Expert Groups	2011 - 2013	NMFS
Unique/Rare Features	Workshop / Expert Groups	2011 - 2012	MBNMS
Facilitating Research	Workshop(s) Expert Groups	2010 - 2012	Partners / Collaboration
Sustainable Uses	Collaboration / Expert Groups	2011 - 2013	MBNMS

In the near term, MBNMS will be forming a series of expert working groups to refine research questions and information needs identified in the initial workshop, and develop recommendations to enhance ecosystem protection. I will initiate this by asking the Research Activities Panel of the MBNMS Advisory Council to establish a specific subcommittee. We plan to invite key partners including the PFMC to participate.

The MBNMS is dedicated to a collaborative process to identify potential intersection points of our EBM Initiative with PFMC's programs and initiatives. Additional details on the Initiative will be provided during my presentation to the PFMC in September.

Sincerely,



Paul Michel
Superintendent