



March 11, 2014

Mayor:
CHUCK DELLA SALA

Paul Michel, Superintendent
MBNMS

Councilmembers:
LIBBY DOWNEY
ALAN HAFPA
NANCY SELFRIDGE
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99 Pacific Street
Monterey, CA 93940

City Manager:
FRED MEURER

Dear Superintendent Michel,

The City of Monterey has a great interest in seeing the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) be strongly connected to the communities in the region. To this end, the City has provided recommendations on numerous occasions to the MBNMS as to how this might be accomplished through creating stronger ties with stakeholders and communities, and granting the Sanctuary Advisory Council (SAC) greater independence from Sanctuary management. The City feels these steps are needed if the SAC is to be the "voice of the community" in relationship to the MBNMS, as envisioned by those who worked so hard for Sanctuary designation. The City-adopted recommendation regarding the structure and function of the SAC is:

"Request that the SAC Charter and Protocols be changed to allow the SAC freedom in setting agendas, drafting correspondence, including to members of Congress, and have SAC appointments made through a community process rather than by the Sanctuary Superintendent. SAC communication to members of Congress should be limited to policy issues, not include 'grass roots lobbying' for increased funding, and only occur if representing a majority view of the SAC.

If the SAC Charter and Protocols cannot be changed, then alternatively it is recommended that the SAC be organized not within NOAA, but rather under State law, or through a local joint powers arrangement or MOU. An 'arms length' relationship to NOAA would provide for truly independent advice and oversight.

For each of these options, it is also recommended that a conflict of interest disclosure statement be required of SAC members, similar to what is required of public officials throughout California.

It should be clearly noted that this recommendation is aimed at fixing a problem inherent in how the SAC is currently organized and in no way is meant to diminish the good will and expertise that each individual member brings to the SAC.”

Congressman Sam Farr has written on this topic as well. His January 31, 2002 letter to the MBNMS remains well articulated, and valid. To quote in part:

“This management plan review should examine ways of providing the SAC with greater independence and strengthening its role as a trusted partner in sanctuary management. The (existing) SAC Charter, (provided by NOAA)...is inconsistent in...providing sanctuary management with oversight over virtually all SAC activity including its membership, communication, and agenda. Because this organizational structure permits hands-on sanctuary involvement in SAC affairs, it has a tendency to diminish public confidence that there is truly a sanctuary-independent mechanism for community input. This in turn opens the door to greater mistrust and criticism of final management decisions...

I strongly encourage the sanctuary management to objectively evaluate their ability, under the present (SAC) protocols, to maintain a relationship with the SAC that affords it the independence essential to its role as an effective liaison between the sanctuary and the community.”

The City hopes that the MBNMS will view this revision of the SAC's Charter and Protocols as the opportunity that it is: a chance to inspire public confidence that the SAC is the “voice of the communities” that has long been envisioned.

Sincerely,



Chuck Della Sala
Mayor